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# A HISTORY OF THE GUPTAS

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BY

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A complete connected history of the Guptas - the Imperial Guptas and the Later Guptas of Malwa and Magadha - has long been a desideratum. In 1935 I wrote and submitted to the University of Bombay an essay on the 'Inscriptions of the Gupta Period and the Light thrown by them on the History of the Period.' It was eventually approved of by the University for the award of the 'Pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji Gold Medal and Prize'. While lecturing on the subject to my postgraduate students, after my return from Germany in 1938, I found it necessary to make a few alterations and additions in the original essay. It is now being published in its modified form at the instance of my students.

In addition to my own critical and exhaustive study of the Gupta inscriptions and other historical sources, I have been greatly profited also by the very valuable and original work already done in this field by several scholars. To them, whether they are named in this book or not, I owe a good deal. The original essay was submitted to the University under the motto, "क 'चन्द्र'प्रभवो वंशः क चाल्पविषया मतिः". In the same vein I might now add

अथवा कृतवाग्द्वारे वंशेऽस्मिन्पूर्वसूरिभिः

मणौ वज्रसमुत्कीर्णे सूत्रस्येवास्ति मे गतिः ॥

An exhaustive index and a map of India, included in this book, will be found useful. Fuller references are purposely omitted in obvious cases. It is hoped that this book will adequately meet the long-felt need.

The publication of this book in these difficult days is entirely due to the great enterprise of Dr. N. G. Sardesai of the Oriental Book Agency, who has already put students of Indology under great obligation by publishing a good number of works on Indological

subjects in the Poona Oriental Series. I sincerely thank him. I must also thank my colleague and friend, Prof. C. R. Devadhar, for the sympathetic interest which he has been taking in all my work.

Fergusson College, Poona.

August 1941

R. N. Dandekar

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# A HISTORY OF THE GUPTAS

## CHAPTER I

### — THE SOURCES —

'The Gupta period', writes Dr. Barnett, 'is in the annals of classical India almost what the Periclean age is in the history of Greece.' Several sources have been made available to us, through the scholarly labours of Indologists, both of the East and of the West, for the reconstruction of an almost correctly datable history of the times of the Gupta dynasty—'the dynasty which had liberated Indians from the Kushan-Sassanian shadow, the dynasty which broke the Hun, unbreakable throughout Asia and Europe, the dynasty which made the name Vikramāditya, a tradition immortal in their country.' These sources are mainly of three kinds—literary, epigraphic and numismatic.

Among the literary sources referring to the history of the Guptas, mention must first of all be made of the Purāṇas, which form perhaps the only source providing any information regarding the origin and the earlier exploits of this illustrious dynasty. We have, however, to utilise the Purāṇas, in this connection, subject to certain reservations, because these literary works are generally characterised by some serious defects from the historical point of view, such as, the absence of dates, the lack of general agreement among themselves, the omission of the names of certain kings, and their usual tendency to treat contemporary dynasties as successive. In the historical chapters of the Purāṇas, the treatment is sketchy and meagre, and the details are

discrepant. In the discovery, by a South Indian scholar, of a new Sanskrit play, 'Kaumudī-Mahotsava' (कौमुदी-महोत्सव), Jayaswal sees a very valuable contribution to the history of the early Gupta period. By means of a study of the literary style and other characteristics, Jayaswal concludes that the play must be a work belonging to the Gupta period. The dramatist is a lady, by name Kīśorikā, her father's name being Kṛṣṇa.

Another equally useful literary source of the Gupta history is supplied by a few fragments of a play, 'Devī-Candraguṭam' (देवीचन्द्रगुप्तम्), by Viśākha-datta (presumably the same as the author of *Mudrārākṣasa*), which were brought to the notice of scholars, about twenty years ago, from quotations in a work on Sanskrit dramaturgy called 'Nāṭya-Darpaṇa' (नाट्यदर्पण). Though the complete drama is not yet available, Sylvain Levi concludes, after a critical examination of the available fragments, that the hero of the play is Candra Gupta II of the Gupta dynasty. New light has been thrown by the play on the genealogy of the Gupta sovereigns. The historical value of the 'Harṣa-caritaṃ' by Bāṇa has now been finally established and accepted by all scholars. The momentous discovery of 'Mañju-srī-mūlakaḥ' (मञ्जुश्रीमूलकम्), a remarkable Mahāyāna chronicle of the succession of imperial powers in India, from 700 B. C., to 750 A. D., without a break, has adequately supplied the account of the Early Gupta and Later Gupta periods, which had been a blank in the history of ancient India so far written. In addition to these and other Indian texts, we possess the very interesting accounts of the travels of Fa Hien and Hsien Tsang, the two Chinese pilgrims, who visited India in the 5th and the 7th centuries A. D., respectively.

Far more useful and reliable than the literary sources are the archaeological sources, mainly consisting of inscriptions and coins, belonging to the Gupta period, the discovery, publication, and historical interpretation of a large number of which worthily stand to the credit and amply testify to the industry and the historical acumen of several scholars, Indian and foreign, Fleet being certainly the foremost among them. These epigraphic records have been inscribed on metals as well as on other materials.

A large number of copperplates belonging to the Gupta period have been discovered and published. They are usually donative charters and are generally called 'grants'. In the case of copperplates, it was customary to string them together by one or two copper rings passing through round holes in them. The most usual method of giving the authentication was by attaching a copper reproduction of the royal seal. Sometimes an additional authentication was given by what purported to be, more or less, an autograph signature of the king. In some cases, an image was employed instead of a seal. The copperplates, like the Indor copperplate of Skanda Gupta, have edges thicker all around, so as to serve, perhaps, as a rim to protect the writing. Mention must be made, at this stage, of a large variety of silver and gold coins belonging to the period. Their fabric and weights can be historically interpreted. But the legends on the reverse and the obverse of these coins, which are far more important, greatly help us by providing important clues for the reconstruction of the history of that period. They also confirm and supplement, in many cases, the information with regard to this dynasty, which we are able to gather from the literary sources and the inscriptions. A very remarkable instance

of an inscription on metal is the Meharaulli Iron Pillar inscription of Candra.

Among the inscriptions on nonmetals, there are several varieties. There is an inscription of Skanda Gupta on a rock at Junagadh. The wellknown inscription of Samudra Gupta is found on a stone pillar at Allahabad. Other stone pillar inscriptions are those at Bhitari, Kahaum, Bilsad, Eran, among others. Two inscriptions of Candra Gupta II, have been discovered on the parts of a cave at Udayagiri. On the front of the pedestal of a seated image of Buddha, found by Cunningham, in a garden at Mankuwar, an inscription was discovered by Pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji, referring to the age of Kumāra Gupta I. Another such inscription of Ādityasena, was found on the seat of a stone image at Shahpur. The Sāranāth inscriptions of Kumāra Gupta and Budha Gupta also belong to this variety. Particular mention must be made of an inscription of Ādityasena on the Mandār hill. Besides these, there is a large number of stone inscriptions, which is the most common variety supplying us the account of the Guptas and their contemporaries. Besides the Gupta coins and inscriptions, a critical and comparative study of other antiquities belonging to the period, such as, pieces of sculpture, terracottas, and architectural monuments, considerably helps the historian to estimate properly the extent and the value of several aspects of the culture and civilisation in the times of the Guptas.

The inscriptions of the Gupta period have been spread all over Northern India, a few being discovered even in some parts of Southern India. A critical examination of the localities shows the large extent of dominions, which were in the possession of different sover-

eigns of this dynasty, from time to time. We must, however, bear in mind that the places of the discovery of these inscriptions are not invariably the exact places of their original publication. A clear indication of their removal is given in certain cases. The study of these find-spots may also help us to reconstruct the geography of ancient India.

The palaeographical aspect of the study of the Gupta inscriptions shows that there are mainly two scripts used in them. The use of one or the other script depends upon the locality, the date and the scribes of the epigraph. In the majority of the Gupta inscriptions the so-called Gupta alphabet is used. But as the script is found not only in the early Gupta inscriptions but also on the coins of the later Indo-Scythian kings of the Punjab, it is more correct to style it as the general North Indian alphabet. This name is given by palaeographers to a large group of epigraphic and literary scripts, which, from about A. D. 350, dominated the whole wide territory north of the Narmada, with the exception of Kathiawar and Northern Gujerat, and which, spreading in the course of time, more and more, finally was used in a number of varieties for nearly all the Aryan languages of India. A few distinct stages can be seen in the development of the North Indian Alphabet of the Gupta inscriptions. The script of the Allahabad pillar inscription which is characterised by a cursive alphabet with signs reduced at the top to the same height, and made throughout, as far as possible, equal in breadth, is taken by Burgess and Bühler to be the standard type of that variety. Prinsep believes that the characters of that inscription are intermediate between those of Asoka's inscriptions and the inscriptions of the

later Gupta period. A few common characteristics of this alphabet are :

(1) The lower parts of the right hand vertical *a*, *a*, *ga*, etc are so much elongated and those of *ka*, *ra*, remain so long that they occupy double the length of those without verticals. This is particularly visible in the old stone inscriptions. In the copperplates, they are considerably shortened.

(2) The guttural *anunasika* begins to appear instead of *anusvara* before *sa* and *ha*.

(3) The first certain *virama* consisting of a horizontal stroke above the small final, dates from the 5th century A. D..

(4) The desire to save space is quite evident.

There are a few orthographical peculiarities in this type such as the doubling of *ka* in connection with the following *ra*, the doubling of *dha* with the following *ya* and *va*, and the use of southern *la*. The Mankuwar stone image inscription of Kumāra Gupta I, the Bhitari stone pillar inscription of Skanda Gupta, the Eran pillar inscription of Budha Gupta, and several other epigraphs discovered in Allahabad, Ghazipur and Gorakhpur districts are palaeographically almost similar to the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta. The second stage in the development of the Northern type of alphabet is represented by the Bilsad pillar inscription of Kumāra Gupta I, which is characterised by the very marked *matras* of the letters. The Mandasor stone pillar inscription of Yasodharman shows a further development of the Allahabad pillar inscription type. We find, in the Aphsad and Shahpur image inscriptions of Āditya-gena, a very marked development in the North Indian

script as contrasted with the preceding copperplates of the Parivrājaka Mahārājas and the Mahārājas of Uccakalpa. It may be called the *kutīla* type in consequence of the upright strokes having at the bottom a small tail which is crooked or bent to the right. The Asirgarh copper seal of Sarvavarman Maukhari, however, presents rather florid characters of the Northern alphabet, perceptibly of older type, than those of the inscriptions of the Guptas of Magadha. The characters of the Maukhari inscriptions exhibit very markedly the fully developed *matras*. Another noteworthy fact is the borrowing of the Indo-Scythian form of *ma* in the Bijayagarh stone pillar inscription of Viṣṇuvardhana.

In the territories south of Vindhya there has been generally used, since about 350 A. D., the script which developed out of the characters of the Andhra period and most of which still survives in the modern alphabets of Dravidian districts. The most common characteristics of this alphabet, called by Burnell and Fleet the southern alphabet, as seen in the Udayagiri cave inscription of Candragupta II, the Sanchi stone inscription of the same king and many other inscriptions of these localities, are :

(1) The retention of the ancient forms open at the top of *gha*, *pā*, *pha*, *sa* etc, of the old *ma*, and of the tripartite *ya*.

(2) The retention of the long stroke on the right of *la* which, however, is mostly bent towards the left.

(3) The *da* with the round back.

(4) The curves originally open at the top at the ends of the long verticals of *a*, *ā*, *ka* etc.

The Saurāṣṭra type of the 5th century A. D. is used in the Junagadh rock inscription of Skanda

Gupta. The Gangadhar stone inscription of Vis'varman exhibits the western Malwa alphabet of the 5th cent. A. D.. The inscriptions of the kings of Sarabhapura present still another variety of the Southern alphabet called by palaeographers the 'box-headed' variety of Central India. A very perfect and beautiful illustration of the 'box-headed' type is available in the inscriptions of the Vākātaka Mahārājas of the Central Provinces.<sup>1</sup>

The original objects of these inscriptions are varied. The main topic of historical importance in many of them is the plain statement of events. The Allahabad column, while eulogising the achievements of Samudra Gupta, gives us, more or less, a detailed history of his glorious career. Comparable to that inscription is also the Mandasor pillar inscription of Yaśodharman. Besides these, there are inscriptions, which record the carrying out of public works, as in the case of the Junagadh rock inscription of Skanda Gupta. The Eran inscription refers to the death of one Goparāja while he and his sovereign, Bhānu Gupta, were fighting the enemies. For almost all such records mentioned in this group we are indebted to the historical instinct of the ancient Indians.

There is another type of inscriptions consisting of records due to religious motives. We owe the great bulk of epigraphic material of this sort to the religious aspect of Hindu character and to the desire of a Hindu

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<sup>1</sup> An interesting paper on Gupta palaeography, by S. K. Bose, based on a comparative study of a large number of duplicate original estampages, appears in *Indian Culture* October 1937.



of making religious endowments on every possible occasion. The Gupta sovereigns have made extensive donations to Brahmins and sometimes even to Buddhists and Jainas. Incidentally these inscriptions refer to the genealogy and the date of the donor and to some other aspects of the religious life of the period.

The third object of the inscriptions is to record secular donations. We have, in this class, the records of donations to private individuals. The donative records are by far the most numerous of all. The essential part of these records is the specification of the details regarding the donor, the donee and the donation. A majority of these again are royal donations. Not with the express object of preserving history, but in order to emphasise the importance of everything connected with religion, and to make grantees secure in the possession of properties conveyed to them, there was gradually accumulated the great mass of such epigraphic records. These are neither few in number, nor are they confined to limited localities. These Gupta inscriptions, whatever their original object might have been, afford considerable help for the reconstruction of a detailed history of that period. We can analyse the contents of all of them and can give, firstly, a more or less connected political history of the dynasty, and, secondly, a coherent picture of the religious, social and economic life of the period.

The majority of these records are specifically dated. There are three principal methods of recording dates in the inscriptions of ancient India. In some of them we find the astronomical reckoning from the *Kaliyuga*, the epoch of which is traditionally accepted to be 3102

B. C.. There are other inscriptions like the Gwalior stone inscription of Mihirakula, where the regnal years of kings are referred to. But by far the most common method of dating the inscriptions of Gupta period seems to be the use of the so-called Gupta era. After a thorough examination of several theories regarding this era, Fleet came to the conclusions that Magadha became independent in 319-20 A. D., that the initial year of the era, which is known to us as the Gupta-Valabhi era was also 319-20 A. D., and that the era was founded by the Licchavis of Nepal. The Gupta era was, according to him, in use beyond the north-east frontiers of India, in Nepal. The Licchavi clan or tribe was one of great antiquity and power in Nepal and there existed friendly relations between the Early Guptas and the Licchavis at an early date. Fleet asserts that there can be no doubt that the early Gupta kings had known the nature and origin of the era which was being used by their Licchavi connections in Nepal. Further the period established for Jayadeva I of Nepal approximates so closely to A. D. 320-21, that it needs but little shifting to place the commencement of his reign actually in that year. This question of the first year of the Gupta era has since then been the subject of much wild conjecture. M. G. Pai, writing in the *Journal of Indian History* (August 1932), criticises the statements made by Alberuni with regard to the Gupta era, and comes to the conclusion that, (1) the Gupta era and the Valabhi era cannot be identified; (2) that neither of them can have 319-20 A. D. for its epoch; (3) and that Alberuni is no safe pilot in this matter. He gives the question further consideration on astronomical grounds and says that, 'to find out the true and exact epoch of the Gupta era, we have to use

a test case and apply that test to about twenty years from 260 A. D. to 280 A. D.' The handiest case was provided by the New Mathura inscription of Candragupta II, which is dated intercalary *Asadha sukla* 5 in G. E. 61 (which is, according to Pai, also the first regnal year of that illustrious king). It was only in 334 A. D. that *Asadha* was intercalary. Therefore, his conclusion was that Gupta year 61 coincides with 334 A. D., which fact gives the epoch of the Gupta era as 272-73 A. D..

Another writer, D. N. Mukerjee, challenges Fleet's determination of Gupta era (I. H. Q. Vol. VIII) and says, 'Dr. Fleet's conclusions go against Indian traditions, Chinese accounts and inscriptional evidences!' The author tries to prove on several astronomical grounds that the Gupta era is exactly the same as the *Vikrama Samvat*. Mukerjee finds positive evidence against Fleet's epoch of the era in the Haraha inscription of Maukhari Mahārājadhīrāja Śaṇavarman. He assumes that, according to that inscription, Śaṇavarman must have attained imperial status before his son, Sūryavarman was born in Vikrama Era (V. E.) 590. According to other epigraphical sources, however, Yaśodharman Viṣṇuvardhana was the paramount sovereign of Northern India reigning in Mālava era (M. E.) 589 (?=V. E. 589). That two kings should, at one and the same time, be paramount, in Northern India, would seem historically improbable. Mukerjee, therefore, concludes that Mālava era cannot be identified with Vikrama Era and that Fleet's epoch is wrong 'at least by a hundred years.' But the very assumption that Śaṇavarman must have attained paramountcy before V. E. 590 is itself unwarranted. The only conclusion, to which the Haraha inscription may lead one, is that Śaṇavarman was Mahārājadhīrāja

before V. E. 611, that is, before the date of the inscription. There is nothing in the inscription to indicate that *Īśānāvarman* achieved his conquests before the birth of *Sūryavarman*. So as a *Mahārājādhirāja*, *Īśānāvarman* cannot be regarded as a contemporary of *Yaśodharman Viṣṇuvardhana*, whose power seems to have been consolidated before 532 A. D. (i. e. the date of the Mandasor inscription). *Yaśodharman Viṣṇuvardhana* came to power and disappeared from the political scene of North India between A. D. 517 and A. D. 542. It is possible that *Īśānāvarman* took his chance after the fall of *Yaśodharman Viṣṇuvardhana*. Thus the *Haraha* inscription does not go against the epoch fixed by Fleet.

Fleet's epoch of the Gupta era is again challenged by *Shamashastri* (*Mysore Archaeological Reports*). He fixes the same in 200-201 A. D.. He also refers to the conclusion arrived at by *Shah* (First Oriental Conference), for 'quite different reasons', that the initial date of the Gupta era is circa 200 A. D.. Many of these theorists seem to put marked emphasis on flimsy traditions rather than on definite epigraphic evidence.

For a critical examination of the whole problem, however, we have to start with the statement of *Alberuni*, namely that the Gupta era was posterior to the *Saka* era by 241 years, and that it was the epoch of the extermination of the Guptas. He mentions another era named after *Balaba*, the initial date of which was the same as that of the Gupta era. Now in some of the inscriptions of the Gupta sovereigns and their feudatory chiefs, the dates are referred to *Guptakala* or the Gupta era, wherefore *Alberuni's* statement that it was the epoch of the Gupta extermination cannot be correct. But this error on his part has nothing whatever to do with the first

part of his statement. As Alberuni's statements regarding the initial dates of Vikrama and Saka eras are correct, the same regarding the initial year of the Gupta era must also be correct. His second assertion might have been based on erroneous tradition. Many scholars reject both statements of Alberuni and accept what simply hangs on them and what must fall with them, namely, that the Guptas were exterminated in Saka 242. When the inscriptions positively show that the era was not posthumous but contemporaneous, we should rather believe that the Guptas rose to power in Saka 242, assigning, at the same time, due value to the other part of the statement of Alberuni, which must have been based on contemporary evidence, that the Gupta era began in that year.

As regards the so-called Valabhi era, we know that the date occurring in the grant of one of the sons of the founder of that dynasty is 207. It is evident, therefore, that this date and many following ones which are in harmony with it and posterior to it, cannot refer to an era dating from the foundation of that dynasty. It is more likely that the dates refer to the Gupta era. It was called Valabhi era, though it was not founded by that dynasty, because kings of Valabhi, who were the feudatories of the Guptas, in the beginning, introduced the era of the Guptas in Surāṣṭra. Their subjects consequently gave it the name of their masters, the Valabhis, and referred to it as the Valabhi era. From an inscription at Sūranātha, discovered by Colonel Tod, we gather that Saka 242 was the first year of the Valabhi era, which fact confirms the statement of Alberuni. This proposed initial date must be examined by applying it to a few inscriptions of that period.

(1) The date of Budha Gupta's Eran pillar inscription is given as Thursday, 12th of *Asadha*, G. E. 165.

(2) Hastin's inscription of G. E. 156, the year of the twelve-year cycle of Jupiter being *Maha-Vaisakha*.

(3) Saṅkṣobha's inscription of G. E. 209, the year of the twelve-year cycle of Jupiter being *Mahavayuja*.

(4) In the Morvi copperplate grant of 5th of *Phalguna*, bright half, of G. E. 585, an eclipse of the sun is mentioned.

We have first of all to remember that in inscriptions the numerical date indicates, in a large number of instances, the number of years of an era that have elapsed, that is, the past year, and only in about one third of cases, it indicates the current year. Out of the three proposed initial dates for the Gupta era—167 A. D. by Cunningham, 190 A. D. by Bayley, and 319-20 A. D. by Alberuni—Alberuni's date alone can be satisfactorily applied to the test-cases mentioned above. This question, however, ought not to be decided on exclusively astronomical grounds, for there are several very confusing elements involved in them. We have to apply the test of other accepted synchronisms and get our view confirmed.

We know from history that the Guptas succeeded the Satraps and that the kings of Valabhi were, in the beginning, dependants of the Guptas and later on became politically independent. The credit of overthrowing the Satraps has been unanimously conceded to Candragupta II, since he is the first sovereign of the Gupta dynasty, whose silver coins are a close imitation of those of the Satraps. The latest known date of that monarch is 93; and the latest date of the Satrap dynasty is 304.

Several proposed epochs of the Gupta era have been applied to this date of Candragupta II, and to suit the then available date of Candragupta II in Christian era, the era used by the Satraps was, indeed strangely, taken to be the Vikrama Era. Still the synchronisms were not historically correct. It was finally proved that the era used by the Satraps was the Saka era and thus their latest known date was 382 A. D., while the date of their conqueror, calculated according to Alberuni's epoch, comes to be 412-413 A. D.. This synchronism is historically quite valid. 'Thus', concludes Sir Ramkrishna Bhandarkar (*History of the Deccan*), 'the evidence in favour of Alberuni's initial date for the Gupta era appears to be simply overwhelming.'

Recently several other scholars have come forward with additional epigraphical data which, according to them, go against the accepted epoch of the Gupta era. The Bhaṭṭakapātra grant of Dharaśena II of G. E. 257 mentions a solar eclipse in that year. But no solar eclipse is said to have been astronomically possible between 573 A. D. and 593 A. D.. Thus the epoch of the Gupta era proposed by Fleet does not hold good. This objection against the accepted epoch, based on the grant of Dharaśena II, is not at all convincing, on account of the imperfect and careless editing of the Bhaṭṭakapātra grants. The Khoh plates of Saṅkṣobha of G. E. 209 (i.e. 528-529 A. D. according to Fleet's epoch) include the words गुप्तपराज्यमुक्तौ. It has been argued on the strength of these plates that since the Guptas were already dispossessed of their territories, by the Hūṇas, circa 515 A. D., the date assigned to the Khoh plates, viz, 528-529 A. D., cannot be correct. Against this objection it may be said that the Guptas, as shown elsewhere, were not dispossessed of *all* their dominions

by the Hūṇas, and that the end of the Gupta regime was certainly not reached in 515 A. D.. These and other objections, based on questionable inscriptional evidence, can further be easily refuted by more positive epigraphical evidence, in favour of fixing up the epoch of the Gupta era in 319-20 A. D.. Such definite evidence has been provided, for instance, by the Mandasor inscription of Kumāra Gupta and Bandhuvarman, dated M. E. 493, and the Ganjam plates of Śaśāṅka, dated G. E. 300. Further epigraphical corroboration of Fleet's epoch comes from quite a different quarter. The rock inscription of Harjavarman at Fezpur is dated G. E. 510. In the succession lists of the Kāmarūpa kings, Harjavarman comes at least ninth in descent from Śālastambha, whose date is known from other sources to be cir. 650 A. D.. The date of Harjavarman will be, according to Fleet's epoch, 829 A. D., which corresponds well with the date, which the succession list would give.

The epoch of the Gupta era is thus 318-19 A. D., and its first year was 319-20 A. D.. Bühler assumes that the era, which became subsequently known as the Gupta era, was really founded in the year of the coronation of Candragupta I. It is, however, impossible, in the absence of positive data, to decide finally what particular event was commemorated by the foundation of this era. It is very likely that this era was counted from the date of the accession of Candragupta I, who liberated the people of Magadha, and that it was afterwards used also by the Licchavis.

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1 An interesting paper on 'Some recent Views on the Gupta Era' by Miss Gupta appears in *Indian Culture*, July 1936.



## CHAPTER II

### THE FOUNDATION OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

It is well and wisely said that Magadha has a history extending far into the early centuries before the Christian era, 'a history, which is undoubtedly unique, at any rate, unrivalled, not only in India, but perhaps, in the whole world.' The province of Magadha had undergone several political and cultural vicissitudes particularly under the illustrious dynasties of the Mauryas, the Sungas and the Kāṇvas. The last-named dynasty, however, ruled only for forty-five years, being ultimately overthrown, in about 28 B. C., by a king of the Śātavāhana dynasty of Dakṣiṇāpatha, the dynasty which is often described as the Āndhra dynasty. The Āndhra dynasty consisting of thirty rulers ruled for a period of 460 years according to Matsya Purāṇa, and for 456 years according to Vāyu Purāṇa. The statement of the Purāṇas that Magadha passed on, after the fall of the Kāṇvas, to the Āndhras is corroborated by the discovery of a Śātavāhana coin in the excavation of Bhītā, in Allahabad district. Another Āndhra coin was recently exhibited by K. N. Dikshit, which, according to him, is unique, since it was found in the Central Provinces. It bears the figure of an elephant and a Brāhmi legend only on the obverse, the reverse being blank. The king's name is *Sivasiri Apilaka*, who is identified with Apilaka of the Purāṇas. The Āndhra dynasty would seem to have come to an end about the end of the 3rd century A. D., Matsya Purāṇa, which is said to have

been composed in the ninth year of Yajña Śrī Śāta-karṇi, mentions that several other dynasties ruled while the Āndhras were still in possession of their kingdom. The Nepal inscription of Jayadeva II Licchavi, dated 758 A. D., states that twenty-three successions before Jayadeva I, his ancestor Supuṣpa Licchavi was born at Pāṭaliputra. The date of Jayadeva I falls, according to Fleet, between circa 330 A. D. and 355 A. D.. Supuṣpa may have thus lived in the beginning of the Christian era. The Āndhras seem to have suffered much by the inroads in Northern India of the early Kuṣāṇa princes, Kadphises and Wema, and this must have afforded ample opportunity to the Licchavis, to fill up the vacuum at Pāṭaliputra. The Licchavi rule, however, seems to have ended about the close of the century when Vanaspara, the minister of Kaniṣka, advanced to Magadha. Before the Āndhra dynasty disappeared from the scene, the local dynasties of Ābhīras, Vindhyakas, Gardhabhilas, Śakas, Tuṣāras and others seem to have attained considerable political independence. A king of the name of Vindhyasakti is mentioned, a century after these feudatory dynasties started a movement for making themselves independent of the Āndhras. His son, Pravīra, according to the Purāṇas, reigned at the city called Kāñcanaka. There are sound reasons to believe — and historians are unanimous in such belief — that Vindhyasakti and Pravīra of the Purāṇas are the same as Vindhyasakti and Pravarasena I, of the Vākāṭaka dynasty. The Vākāṭaka sovereign, Pravarasena I, got his son, Gautami-putra, married to a daughter of the Bhārasīva king, Mahārāja Bhavanāga. This event was so important in the history of the Vākāṭaka dynasty that it was incorporated in the dynastic history of the Vākāṭakas and was

repeated in all their official records. There it is recorded that before this political marriage, the family of the Bhārasīvas had performed ten horse-sacrifices on the banks of the Ganges, which they had conquered through their valour. This reference suggests that the Bhārasīva dynasty must have been in existence for about at least a century. Their rise to power can thus be roughly dated about 150 A. D., which date synchronises with the end of the Kuṣāṇa rule. The sequence of the political events after the fall of the Kāṇva dynasty therefore seems to be as follows: The Kāṇvas were overthrown by a Śātavāhana king, who subsequently became ruler of Magadha. The Śātavāhanas could not have been at Pāṭaliputra and in Magadha for more than fifty years after the fall of the Kāṇvas. During the period when the early Kuṣāṇa princes, Kadphises and Wema, were advancing against the Śātavāhana prince in Northern India, a local Licchavi ruler established himself at Pāṭaliputra. The Licchavis, however, in their turn, had also to quit Pāṭaliputra ultimately when a minister of Kanīṣka advanced against the Magadha capital. The Kuṣāṇas were thus virtual masters of the whole of Northern India for some time after the beginning of the decadence of the Āndhra power. During this period the erstwhile feudatories of the Āndhras were trying to make themselves politically independent. The downfall of the Kuṣāṇas, as has already been pointed out, was accompanied by the rise of the Bhārasīvas. The Purāṇas mention Vindhyaśakti and Pravīra-Vindhyasakti and Pravarasena of the Vākāṭaka dynasty—a century after the Bhārasīvas rose to power, that is, in circa 250 A. D.. There were thus two great dynasties, about that time, in Northern India, that of the Bhārasīvas, who rose to power immediately

after the fall of the Kuṣāṇas, and that of the Vākātakas, who seem to have attained predominance about a century later. These two dynasties were responsible for 'the foundation of new tradition—or rather the revival of old tradition—the tradition of Hindu freedom and sovereignty.' The tradition was initiated by the Bhārasivas, was kept up by the Vākātakas, who were connected to the Bhārasivas, in Pravarasena I's time, through matrimonial alliance, and finally reached its glorious culmination under the subsequent Gupta sovereigns, from Candragupta II Vikramāditya to Balāditya II. This tradition was characterised by three ideals (Jayaswal : History of India ),— all-India Imperialism, Revival of Sanskrit, and Social Revival.

When the Bhārasivas liberated the Gangetic valley and reorganised the political scheme over there in about 250 A. D., we find Magadha in possession of an orthodox Kṣatriya family. Itsing, who travelled in India between 670 and 700 A. D., states that 'a great king, Śrī Gupta (*cha - li - ki - to*) built a temple near Mṛgaśikhāvana for some Chinese pilgrims, about 500 years ago.' This would give Śrī Gupta a date somewhere about 175 to 200 A. D.. We are further told by Itsing that Mṛgaśikhāvana 'was about fifty stages east of Nalanda descending Ganges'. Ganguly (I. H. Q. September 1938) has carefully calculated that Itsing's stage equalled about six miles, basing his conclusion on the same Chinese traveller's another statement that Nalanda was 'seven stages to Northeast of Mahābodhi.' It would thus appear that Śrī Gupta originally ruled over a principality in Murshidabad district of Bengal between circa 175-200 A. D.. If we depend upon the Purāṇic tradition in this connection, it may further be assumed that, at the commencement of the 4th century, the

early Guptas were associated with the banks of the Ganges, dominated by the cities of Prayāga and Sāketa. The vicissitudes of the Magadha kingdom, during this period, cannot, however, be reconstructed in a connected form from epigraphical sources. Jayaswal's theories, in this connection, based on Mañju-Srī-Mūlakalpa (M M K) and the play, Kaumudī-Mahotsava (K M), have been referred to later on.

Allan rejects the accepted date of Srī Gupta and identifies him with Gupta, the grandfather of Candra Gupta I, who is mentioned first in the genealogical list of the Guptas, in their inscriptions. How can, he asks, two kings of the same name belonging to the same family—Srī Gupta mentioned by Itsing and Gupta the grandfather of Candra Gupta I, mentioned in Gupta inscriptions—come so close to each other? This objection, however, carries no weight, because instances could be cited, from the Gupta history, of two Candra Guptas and two Kumāra Guptas not far removed from each other. If we grant the validity of Itsing's statement we have also to accept the date inferred therefrom. The immediate successors of Srī Gupta are not known. They seem, however, to be gradually growing in power. Gupta, perhaps a grandson of Srī Gupta, seems to have risen to the position of a feudatory prince. This is suggested by the fact that Gupta is styled in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta as Mahārāja and is appropriately called अदिराज in the Poona plates of Prabhāvatiguptā Vākātaka. Vincent Smith rightly places him between 275–300 A. D.. Next to Gupta, Allahabad pillar inscription mentions Mahārāja Ghaṭotkaca as the son of Mahārāja Gupta. Bloch suggested that this Ghaṭotkaca may be identical with Ghaṭotkaca Gupta, whose name appeared as घटोत्कचगुप्तस्य on a seal

at Vaisālī. This, however, does not seem to be possible since the name of the son of Mahārāja Gupta and the father of Candragupta I has, in no inscription, been given as Ghaṭotkaca Gupta, but has been given merely as Ghaṭotkaca. Moreover D. R. Bhandarkar has suggested that the spot at Vaisālī, where a large number of seals were unearthed, must have been the ancient site of the office of the person, who was entrusted, in Candragupta II's time, with the duty of making seals. How could he have possessed seals belonging to the period one century before his date? Ghaṭotkaca Gupta referred to on the seals seems to have been a member of the royal Gupta family, who must have been appointed the viceroy of a province at that time. It was also suggested by some scholars that some gold coins, hitherto invariably classed in the Early Gupta series, which have on the obverse the name of Kāca should be attributed to Ghaṭotkaca, the father of Candragupta I. But the epithet, सर्वराजोच्चेता, occurring on the reverse of the same coins, and the fact that Ghaṭotkaca, being merely a feudatory Mahārāja, was not entitled to issue coinage in his own name, finally and convincingly disprove this theory. Ghaṭotkaca must have been ruling, according to Allan, between 300 and 320 A. D..

The Allahabad pillar inscription styles Candragupta, the father of Samudragupta, as Mahārājādhirāja, which fact indicates that Candragupta had risen to sovereign power in his time. Secondly we learn from the coins of Candragupta I— the coins which are generally attributed to his reign but which must have been presumably issued by his son and successor, Samudragupta— that Candragupta I attained political domination through his marriage to the Licchavi princess, Kumāradevi. Few other inscriptional and numismatic sources add to our

knowledge about this sovereign, who was certainly the progenitor of the imperial Gupta dynasty.

It has been argued by Aiyangar that Candrar of the Meharauli Iron pillar inscription is no other than Candrar Gupta I. Meharauli is Mihirapurī, a village about nine miles south of Delhi near the site of Kutub-minar. On an iron pillar is inscribed an evidently posthumous eulogy of one Candrar, regarding whose lineage no information has been given. Attempt has been made, on the basis of stanza 2<sup>1</sup> in the inscription, to prove that Candrar of the Meharauli pillar was not dead at the time of the inscription and that, therefore, the inscription was not a posthumous one, as is generally assumed. But the tone of the stanza, and particularly the reference यस्य प्रतापो महान् नाद्याप्युत्सृजति.....क्षितिम्, taken together with the reference, शान्तस्येव महावने हुतभुजः, definitely points to the posthumous character of the inscription. With no other assumption can the word, अद्यापि, be properly explained. The epigraph is undated and its object seems to be to commemorate the erection of the pillar, Viṣṇudhvaja, on a hill called Viṣṇupada, which is usually identified with the Delhi Ridge. The fact that the underground supports of the column include several small pieces of metal "like bits of bar-iron" is in favour of its being now in its original position, though tradition ascribes the erection of the pillar in its present site to Anangapāla, in the early part of 8th century A. D.. The Viṣṇupada mentioned here, however, cannot be possibly identified with the

1 खिन्नस्येव विसृज्य गां नरपतेर्गमाश्रितस्येतरां

मूर्त्या कर्मजितावनीं गतवतः कीर्त्या स्थितस्य क्षितौ ।

शान्तस्येव महावने हुतभुजो यस्य प्रतापो महान्

नाद्याप्युत्सृजति प्रणाशितरिपोर्यत्नस्य शेषः क्षितिम् ॥

Delhi Ridge. In the Rāmāyaṇa (II-68-18'19), Viṣṇupada is mentioned together with Vipās' and Śālmali. All these places are said to be in the vicinity of the Bāhlika country. Other epic references in this regard collected by Chakravarti (A. B. O. R. I. VIII) also point to the same conclusion. As suggested by Bhandarkar (I. C. January 1937) Viṣṇupada was 'a hill in the Punjab from which Kashmir was visible.' So it is more correct to assume that the pillar was originally erected in this part of the country, which assumption may also be supported by the reference in the inscription to the conquest of the Bāhlikas, that is to say, of the people near Vipās' and Viṣṇupada.<sup>1</sup> The characters of the inscription belong to the Northern class of alphabets approximating those of the Allahabad pillar inscription. Who is this Candra referred to in this inscription? The inscription records that all those who were antagonistic to Candra confederated and making a common cause attacked his territory from the side of Bengal. Candra, however, won a victory over them by pressing them back. Another event mentioned in the line तीर्त्वा येन मुखानि सप्त समरे सिन्धोजिता बाल्हिकाः must be specifically a successful war against the Bāhlikas of Bactria (Balkh) by getting across the seven mouths of the Indus. Candra of this inscription is further said to have acquired 'sole sovereignty of the earth,' ऐकाधिराज्यम्, after a long-continued effort.

It has been suggested by certain scholars that Candragupta Maurya erected this iron column and Samudra

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1 Further as regards the tradition that Anangapala I, was the person who removed it to the present site, it has been suggested by Chakravarti (A.B.O.R.I. VIII) that Sultan Feroz-shah was the person who removed it.



Gupta, after about 600 years, regarding Candragupta Maurya as his ideal hero, got the present eulogy inscribed on it. Candragupta Maurya ruled for a long time over a big empire and died full of years and glory. He had defeated the Bāhlikas and had advanced as far as the ocean. But it must be said that this evidence is not sufficient to identify Candra of the Meharauli pillar with Candragupta Maurya. The same description may be applied, and surely more adequately, even to Candra Gupta II. Besides the very assumption that Samudra Gupta revived the pillar after about 600 years is based on mere conjecture, in order to get rid of palaeographical objections.

On palaeographical grounds Fleet is inclined to assume that the inscription may possibly refer to Candra Gupta I. Aiyangar, who definitely assigns the inscription to Candra Gupta I, believes that 'Candra Gupta I began his life as ruler of his ancestral dominions among the banks of the Ganges just like his father and grandfather before him. He must have been a man of achievement as otherwise the credit of the foundation of the empire would not have been given to him as such. The marriage with the Licchavi princess gave him prestige, influence and territory. This new addition rounded off his frontier and brought him into touch with Bengal on the one side and the petty states of Central India and the Punjab on the other. Candra Gupta's conquest of the Bengal frontiers was thus quite possible.' His principal achievements, however, according to Aiyangar, were against his neighbours on the west and the northwest. His Bāhlika conquest takes him as far as Sindh and Surāstra. This does not refer to the destruction of the Sakas, but only to the defeat of the rulers in that locality and to the treaty following thereupon. All this,

however, seems to be an overestimate of the achievements of Candra Gupta I. The Bāhlika conquest, considering the reference to the seven months of the Indus, must necessarily imply that the conqueror had reached Balkh, which is quite improbable in the case of Candra Gupta I. A critical examination of the exploits of Samudra Gupta as described in the Allahabad pillar inscription proves only this much, that his father ruled in the Gangetic valley from Prayāga to Pātali-putra. There is not the slightest hint in the Allahabad pillar inscription that the frontiers of Bengal were also in the possession of Candra Gupta I. Moreover the boast of the 'sole sovereignty of the earth' is untenable in Candra Gupta I's case. Had the achievements described in the Meharauli pillar inscription been those of Candra Gupta I, his son, Samudra Gupta, would most certainly have referred to them in his own record. The identification of Candra of the Meharauli pillar inscription with Candra Gupta I cannot, therefore, stand the test of logic and historical validity.

Aiyar proposed that Candra of Meharauli iron pillar inscription was the same as Sadācandra Bhārasīva, who succeeded Bhavanāga, the *vaivahika* of Vākātaka Pravarasena I. He must have been ruling the territory dependent on Vidisā in east Malwa, just about the same time when Samudra Gupta or his father, Candra Gupta I, dominated the Gangetic valley. If this Sadācandra fought a battle against the confederated enemies on the Bengal frontiers, how did he manage to get unchallenged access to the battlefield across the whole of Magadha? Further the Purāṇas, which happen to be the only source of the history of the Bhārasīva dynasty, do not mention these exploits of Sadācandra.

Haraprasad Sastri was the first scholar to maintain that Candra of the Meharauli pillar inscription was Candavarman, the ruler of Puṣkarāṇa. A record of this Candavarman inscribed on the face of a rock, called the Sisunia rock near Raniganja, was published in *Epigraphia Indica*, where R. D. Bannerjee also identified him with Candra of the Meharauli pillar. In the Gangadhar record dated 404 A. D. of his son, or according to Haraprasad Sastri, of his brother, Naravarman, however, no reference is made to such a great achievement of Candavarman. The only common feature of the Sisunia rock and the Meharauli iron pillar inscriptions is that both of them are Vaiṣṇava records. The geographical positions of Puṣkarāṇa (Rajputana), the Sisunia rock, and Viṣṇupada again renders the proposed identification untenable. It seems that Candavarman, mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription among the rulers of Āryāvarta subjugated by Samudra Gupta, is the same as that of the Sisunia rock. Candavarman of Puṣkarāṇa was an aggressive ruler who attempted an incursion in Samudra Gupta's territory. Sisunia inscription seems to be the result of his temporary success. Samudra Gupta later turned round upon him after his return from South India and rendered him powerless. Thus the third theory regarding the identification of Candra of Meharauli inscription also falls to the ground.

It is very interesting to compare the language of and the expressions on the coins of Candra Gupta II with those occurring on the Meharauli iron pillar. The striking similarity between them leads one to believe that Candra of the Meharauli pillar inscription was really Candra Gupta II. This belief is corroborated by ample evidence. Both the sources namely the coins of Candra Gupta II, and the Meharauli pillar inscription

speak of the sovereign as a great Vaiṣṇava. The last line of the inscription contains a word which was generally read as धावेन. It has proved a great enigma to epigraphists. Fleet reads it as धावेन, which gives no relevant sense. Can it not be read as देवेन? It may then be taken to refer to the personal name of Candra Gupta II, viz. Deva Gupta, which latter is also used in some of the Vākāṭaka records. A specific victory over Balkh would have been necessary if Candra Gupta II had wanted to finish the Kuṣāṇa rule in India once for all. Bactria was the real base of the Kuṣāṇas wherefrom they retrieved their position, which was shaken in India in the past. It was indeed necessary for Candra Gupta II to wage war over the whole of *Sapta-sindhu*. And this actually was, as will be shown later, one of the principal achievements of Candra Gupta II. Conquest of Bengal by Candra Gupta II is also proved by the possession of that province by his descendants after him. The script of the Meharauli inscription is certainly very similar to that of the Allahabad pillar inscription. The language and style of the stanzas in the Meharauli inscription are such as Kālidāsa, who was patronised by Candra Gupta II, would have employed. Candra Gupta II's political influence in southern countries, which is suggested in that inscription, is a well-established fact. Any conclusions regarding the career of Candra Gupta I, based on the authority of the Meharauli inscription, will, therefore, be proved to be historically untenable.

The so-called coins of Candra Gupta I also have proved rather misleading. These are known in sufficiently large number, but it is extremely doubtful whether they were issued by the king whose name they bear. The *chatra* coins of the Guptas appear to Aiyangar

to have been the issue of Candragupta I. There are two varieties of these coins. 'Hoey' specimen with the letters *Candragupta*, a royal umbrella, and the picture of the sovereign on the obverse and the legend *vikramaditya* on the reverse, suggests that they were struck on the model of coins of the last great Kuṣāṇa, Vāsudeva. This imitation of the Kuṣāṇa coins by Candragupta I indicates, according to Aiyangar, a close contact of the territories belonging to the two dynasties, which would be possible only on the assumption of Candragupta I's western and north-western achievements. That possibility has been already proved to be untenable. Moreover the legend *vikramaditya* on the reverse of that specimen cannot be explained in the case of Candragupta I. These coins must necessarily have belonged to Candragupta II, who was the first Gupta sovereign to call himself Vikramāditya. So too the 'marriage type' of Allan is ascribed by Aiyangar to Candragupta I. If the coins bearing the names of Candragupta I and Kumāradevi were really issued by Candragupta I then we are at a loss to account for a return in the standard type of Samudra Gupta's coins to a relatively slavish imitation of Kuṣāṇa type, from the comparative originality of his father's coins. Secondly, had the Gupta coins been a local development in Magadha of the late Kuṣāṇa coins, from which latter they were obviously derived, one would expect the latter to be present among finds of Gupta coins. We have therefore to place the origin of Gupta coinage in a period when the Guptas had come into closer contact with the later great Kuṣāṇas, whose eastern Punjab coinage they copied. The historical evidence, which we possess, points to the fact that this period falls not during the reign of Candragupta I but later. Thirdly,

apart from the initial assumption that the Candragupta coins, being farther removed from the Kuṣāṇa type than the standard type, which latter was not found in any coins ascribed to Candragupta I, belong to a later period, a careful comparison of their fabric with that of the standard type indicates that they were struck by Samudragupta. And finally if Candragupta I issued coins it would appear strange that Samudragupta did not continue their issue (Allan : Catalogue of Gupta coins). Allan's contention that the coins bearing the names of Candragupta and Kumāradevi were memorial medals struck by Samudragupta receives support from other coin-types of Samudragupta, such as, the aśvamedha type or the lyrist type. Thus there is very little numismatic evidence regarding the history of Candragupta I's times.

Jayaswal believes that the acquisition of the throne of Magadha from an orthodox Kṣatriya king, by Candragupta I, forms the plot of the play, Kaumudī-Mahotsava (K M), discovered recently by Rameshchandra Kavi. Sundaravarman, the father of Kalyāṇavarman, died in a battle for the defence of Pāṭaliputra, when it was besieged by one Candrasena and the Licchavis. Sundaravarman seems to have belonged to the orthodox Kṣatriya family, which ruled at Pāṭaliputra at the time of the political reorganisation of the Gangetic valley by the Bhārasīvas. His dynasty is called Magadha dynasty in KM and is referred to, according to Jayaswal (J. I. H.), as Koṭakula, in the Allahabad pillar inscription. Pires assumes (The Maukharis) that since Sundaravarman's dynasty is named Magadhakula after Magadha, which was the homeland of the Maukharis, since, again, his name ends in *varman*, which is usually the case with Maukhari royal names, and since they are said to be

orthodox Kṣātriyas in the play, it is almost certain that Sundaravarman of Kaumudī-Mahotsava belonged to the Maukhari dynasty. The recently discovered Chandravalli inscription of Mayūrasarman has revealed the fact that Maukharis ruled in Magadha in the time of the early Kadambas, that is, in 4th-century A. D.. This assumption may seem to carry great weight. This Sundaravarman, as KM describes, had adopted Caṇḍasena as his कृतक son. Caṇḍasena, however, contracted a marriage with a Licchavi princess, even though the Licchavis were enemies of the Magadhakula. A son was born to Sundaravarman in his old age, which fact barred the possibility of Caṇḍasena's coming to the Magadha throne. Though Caṇḍasena proclaimed himself as belonging to Magadhakula, he found an opportunity to lay siege to the capital Kusumapura, with the help of the Licchavis; and after a victorious battle with his adopted father he established himself as the king of Magadha. Kalyāṇavarman, the young son of Sundaravarman, was, in the meanwhile, taken on the lake of Pampā at Vyādhakīkindha. His prime-minister, Mantragupta, and commander-in-chief, Kuñjaraka, were both striving hard to reinstate him on the Magadha throne. A supreme opportunity soon offered itself when Caṇḍasena was obliged to leave his capital and go out with his army to quell a revolt of his governors among the Śabaras and the Pulindas, on the frontier of Magadha. The revolt itself was stirred up by the two wise ministers of Kalyāṇavarman, Mantragupta and Kuñjaraka. During Caṇḍasena's absence from Pāṭaliputra, Mantragupta had a secret conference with the city-council who favoured the return of Kalyāṇavarman to the throne of Magadha. He was accordingly summoned back to the capital and was enthroned immediately.

For the sake of political security of Kalyāṇavarman Mantragupta also arranged an alliance with the king of Śūrasena Janapada, the Yādava Kirtisena of Mathurā. His daughter, Kirtimatī, was married to Kalyāṇavarman.

Two arguments have been put forth by Jayaswal in favour of his assumption that Caṇḍasena of K M is no other than Candra Gupta I. It is suggested that Caṇḍasena dropped *Sena* and assumed the name *Gupta*. Gupta was his grandfather's name, which was turned by him into a dynastic title. His father's name was not joined with *Gupta*. For चन्द्र being चण्ड in Prākṛta, we have the other instance of the inscription of Caṇḍasāti, the Śātavāhana king. The Gupta inscriptions mention Candra Gupta I's natural parentage, which, according to Hindu law, he had not lost even when he became Sundaravarman's कृतक son. The identification is upheld by Caṇḍasena's matrimonial alliance with Licchavis, which fact is corroborated by numismatic evidence. The Licchavis had to quit Magadha on account of the advance of Vanaspara, a viceroy of Kanīṣka. They had since then established themselves on the frontiers of the Magadha kingdom, and had been awaiting an opportunity to regain the lost Magadha throne. They ultimately helped this rising feudatory prince, Candra Gupta, who was a favourite of Sundaravarman of Pāṭaliputra, and instigated him against his adopted father.

The Licchavis could not have possibly allowed Kalyāṇavarman to remain long in possession of the Magadha throne. They had to take care of Candra Gupta's family and, very probably, even before Candra Gupta's army had returned from the frontier provinces of Magadha, Kalyāṇavarman was defeated and



killed or forced to retreat from Pāṭaliputra. Such a hypothesis explains why Kalyāṇavarman's name does not figure in the Allahabad pillar inscription among the rulers of Āryāvarta conquered by Samudra Gupta. Nāgasena, mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription, however, seems to be the son of Kīrtisena of Mathurā, who was the father-in-law of Kalyāṇavarman. Kalyāṇavarman seems to have found time, in the meanwhile, to celebrate his return to Magadha by a Kaumudimahotsava, which event inspired the poetess, Kīśorikā-Vijjikā according to some scholars—to produce this play. She seems to have been a strong admirer of the family of Sundaravarman, for while giving the general historical background quite correctly, she has presented Caṇḍasena—Candra Gupta I—rather too unfavourably. The angry authoress of the drama calls the Licchavis, *mlecchas*, and Caṇḍasena, a Kāraskara, (who could, by the way, be legally adopted by a Kṣatriya), implying a casteless or low-caste person not fit for royalty. This might suggest that Guptas were originally Kāraskara Jāṭas, who migrated during the Bhārasīva period when, presumably, a Bhārasīva king gave one of those Guptas a fief, having border-land between Bihar and Kausambi. This low origin of the Guptas confirms the Purāṇic tradition, namely that Kṣatriyas lost their right to rule by being uprooted by Sūdras. But other facts clearly hinted in the play, namely that Caṇḍasena (Candra Gupta I) was totally hated by the Magadhans on account of his low caste, that his character was that of a usurper, and that he failed to adopt himself to the traditional Hindu way of government, may be purposeful exaggeration and derogatory overemphasis due to the partiality of the poetess and to her effort to please her masters. The general impression produced by the play that

Candra Gupta I, who was a great tyrant and usurper, was, on account of his misbehaviour, expelled by the citizens of Pāṭaliputra, who rose in revolt against him in the cause of their former rulers, and that, as a result of this, Candra Gupta I, had to die in exile, in misery and despair, cannot be historically authentic. Alberuni's statement to the effect that the kings associated with the Gupta era were cruel and wicked must have been based on an erroneous tradition, just like his statement that the epoch of the Gupta era was the epoch of the Gupta extermination. The authority of KM, as a source of history, is thus to be considerably restricted. The only historically valid facts regarding Candra Gupta I's career which may be gleaned from KM and which are confirmed, according to Jayaswal, by other epigraphic and numismatic evidence are :

(1) Candra Gupta I, was a Kāraskara Jāta by caste.

(2) His matrimonial alliance with the Licchavis enabled him to conquer the Maukhari king of Pāṭaliputra and establish himself there. He thus rose from the position of Māhārāja, a feudatory prince, to that of Mahārājādhirāja, an independent sovereign, which fact is amply evidenced by the Allahabad pillar inscription.

(3) He had to fight the frontier tribes, like the Sabaras, whom he ultimately defeated. During that campaign of his, Kalyāṇavarman, the son of the former king of Magadha, came back to the Magadha throne and occupied it for some time, but was again successfully ousted by Candra Gupta I's Licchavi relatives, perhaps even before he returned from the frontiers.

(4) Candra Gupta I, on returning to Pāṭaliputra, selected Samudra Gupta to succeed him.

(5) If Samudra Gupta had personally defeated Kalyāṇavarman during the absence on the frontiers of his father, Candragupta I, and thus proved his worth, the victory should have been recorded; and it was recorded, according to Jayaswal, in the missing syllables of line 13 of the Allahabad pillar inscription. Jayaswal identified the Magadhakula with the Koṭakula and consequently concluded that Koṭakulaja in the Allahabad pillar inscription refers to Kalyāṇavarman. Kalyāṇavarman was, however, a Maukhari king. Was he perhaps descended from the Koṭa family on his mother's side? The brother-in-law of Kalyāṇavarman belonging to the royal family of Mathurā, named Nāgasena, is also referred to in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta.

These conclusions arrived at by Jayaswal on the basis of KM, howsoever ingenious, are not at all convincing. To begin with, the prakṛtised form of चन्द्र cannot properly be चण्ड as Jayaswal has assumed. According to the drama, again, Candrasena had merely ordinary *sambandha*—political alliance—with the Licchavis, there being absolutely no reference to the matrimonial alliance. Candragupta I, however, as we know from numismatic sources, married a princess of the Licchavis. Further it may be argued that Candragupta I's (Candrasena of KM) adoption by Sundaravarman of Magadha becomes meaningless, in view of the fact that the former's father, Ghaṭotkaca, was himself a king, whose political influence was gradually increasing along the Gangetic valley. So too, the reference in KM regarding the extermination of Candrasena—वत्सानुबन्धः निहितः चण्डसेनहतकः— the entire family of Candrasena was destroyed,—cannot be adequately understood in case of his identification

with Candra Gupta I. The stanza, आयौ हीयुपगुह्य etc., of the Allahabad pillar inscription, picturesquely describes how Candra Gupta I, in the presence of the members of the royal family and with the tacit consent of the council of ministers, installed Samudra Gupta as Yuvarāja. This cannot be possible in the case of Candrasena as represented in KM. These objections against accepting KM as a reliable source of history render the inferences, drawn by Jayaswal therefrom, regarding the early history of the Guptas historically untenable. It would be more correct to suppose that the orthodox Kṣatriya family, in whose possession Magadha was circa 250 A.D., when the Bhārasivas liberated the Gangetic valley and reorganised the whole political scene over there, had to suffer from the aggressive policy of two rising dynasties—firstly that of the Guptas forcing their way in the Gangetic valley from their original principality in Bengal, and secondly that of the Licchavis, whose direct objective seems to have been the capital of Magadha itself. The Purāṇic tradition presents the Guptas, at the beginning of the 4th century A. D., as dominating the Gangetic valley, particularly the provinces of Prayāga and Sāketa. The same tradition further refers to the disregard of the distinctions of caste, in those days, as the result of which, the traditional right, of only Kṣatriyas, to rule was denied and was usurped by other lower castes also. This may suggest the domination of Magadha by Licchavis, who were avowedly a low race. It would thus seem that Pāṭali-putra was already occupied by Licchavis while Śrī Gupta, Ghaṭotkaca, and Candra Gupta I had, been still gradually establishing their supremacy in the Gangetic valley. Numismatic evidence clearly points to the marriage between Candra Gupta I, and Kumāradevī, a Licchavi

princess. The two rising dynasties, the Guptas and the Licchavis, who were advancing against the Kṣatriya family ruling over Magadha in circa 250 A. D., were thus united through a matrimonial alliance, the consequent advantage of this alliance being later on exclusively enjoyed by the Guptas. Candra Gupta I, became, in this manner, the master not only of his paternal heritage in the Gangetic valley, to which he must himself have made substantial additions, but also of the kingdom of Magadha, which passed on to him on account of his matrimonial alliance with the Licchavis. Recognising the glorious traditions of Magadha and its capital, Candra Gupta I, seems to have transferred the original capital of his family in Bengal to Pāṭaliputra and thus became the first Mahārājādhirāja among the Gupta sovereigns.

Candra Gupta could easily establish peace and prosperity in Magadha. This was undoubtedly due to a revival of national spirit in that province. From humble origin, the Guptas grew into a dynasty of the best type of Hindu rulers. They assimilated in themselves the genuine Magadhan culture and stood for the upholding of धर्म, नीति and ब्राह्मण.

The Allahabad pillar inscription makes it clear that Candra Gupta I's rule was confined to Magadha and the adjoining territories. According to Allan, the Purāṇa verses about Gupta dominions refer to Candra Gupta I's reign. He assumes that Vaisālī was one of Candra Gupta I's earliest conquests. This cannot, however, be correct; for the Licchavis were originally the rulers of Northern Bihar or Tirabhukti, having their capital at Vaisālī. During their temporary expulsion from Pāṭaliputra by the Kuṣāṇa viceroy, the Licchavis seem to have gone back to Vaisālī. Vaisālī does not also

occur in the list of Samudra Gupta's acquisitions. It first appears as a Gupta possession, in the time of Candragupta II, in the form of a viceroyalty under an imperial prince.

The two other powers of considerable importance in Northern India, at the time of Candragupta I, were the Satrapas and the Vākātakas. It is necessary to estimate at this stage their political relations with Candragupta I. A critical examination of the Kṣatrapa coins led Rapson to believe that the decadence of their power had begun about that time. It coincides with the rise of Pravarasena I, Vākātaka, who justifiably styles himself *Samrāt* in his record. Buehler raised objections, without any valid evidence, against the generally accepted identification of Vindhyaśakti and Pravāra of the Purāṇas, with Vindhyaśakti and Pravarasena of the Vākātaka dynasty. Vākātaka records claim for Pravarasena I, the performance of several sacrifices, "all of which seem more or less to form a series of ceremonies constituting the full *Asvamedha*". His other achievements, whatever they may have been, are not recorded in Vākātaka inscriptions. Only the name of his son is given as Gautamīputra, but evidently he did not rule; and when the grandson of Pravarasena I, Rudrasena I, ascended the Vākātaka throne, the title *Samrāt*, for some reason or other, is found to have been given up. Aiyangar has brought forward a wealth of evidence, from Purāṇas and from a work written by Rāmadāsa, to bear out the facts that the Guptas and the Vākātakas were fighting for sovereignty and that though the latter could boast of a succession of rulers, as indicated by the expression *कमपत* in the legend of their seals, the former, in the end, succeeded in the trial for paramount power. Candragupta I, who seems to have

started defying the imperial authority of the old emperor Pravarasena I, and Samudra Gupta, who seems to have crushed his Vākāṭaka contemporary, Rudrasena I, compelled the Vākāṭakas into a subordinate alliance with them.

As a result of his investigations based on a study of Satrapa coins, Rapson observes: 'All the evidence afforded by the coins or the absence of coins during this period, 305 A. D. to 348 A. D., the failure of the direct line and the substitution of another family, the cessation first of the Mahākṣatrapas and later of both Mahākṣatrapas as well as Kṣatrapas seems to indicate troublous times. The probability is that their dominions were subject to some foreign invasion.' The period would include, in the first half, the expansion of the Vākāṭakas under Pravarasena I. This progress of Pravarasena I, must have led at least to the narrowing of the territory held by the Kṣatrapas, if not to its utter extinction. They had to abandon Malwa, which constituted the central block of their territory. The latter part of this period, mentioned by Rapson, would fall in the reigns of Candra Gupta I, and Samudra Gupta. The Kṣatrapas were already reduced by the Vākāṭakas; the Vākāṭaka collapse under Samudra Gupta and the expansion of his authority closer to the Vindhya mountains clearly indicate further reduction of the extent of Kṣatrapa territory. Candra Gupta I, however, does not seem to have come directly in contact with or to have provoked either the Vākāṭakas or the Kṣatrapas.

Candra Gupta I, was presumably much advanced in age at the time of the occupation of Magadha by the Guptas and we have positive proof of his short rule in Magadha in the date of the Gaya copperplate of his son, Samudra Gupta. The date of Candra Gupta I's death,

which may be inferred from the Gaya copperplate, appears to be 328 A. D.. Candra Gupta I, was responsible for laying the foundations of the Gupta empire. The Vākātakas made it possible for him to do so, by desisting from active hostility. Candra Gupta only prepared the ground for future glorious achievements of Samudra Gupta, to whom he had handed down a sufficiently strong base in Magadha from where Samudra Gupta could launch on his Vijaya-yātrā.

A small number of extremely rare gold coins bearing the name Kāca has given rise to a controversy regarding the identification of that monarch. The proposed attribution of those coins to Ghaṭotkaca, the father of Candra Gupta I, has already been proved to be untenable. Fleet and Vincent Smith, on the strength of the evidence of the title सर्वराजोद्भक्ता on those coins and of the fact that the legend on the Kāca type is synonymous with that of the Archer type and further of the allusion to the pious works of Samudra Gupta, conclude that Kāca was a personal and less formal name of Samudra Gupta himself. But up to this time, coins of the same Gupta sovereign bearing two different names in addition to the *birudas* have not been discovered. The established practice of the Gupta coins is to put the real name of the king on the margin of the obverse or at the foot of the royal figure in a vertical line and his *birudas* on the reverse or elsewhere. In the ordinary type of coins of Gupta sovereigns only one name is uniformly given under the left arm, for instance, Candra for Candra Gupta II, Kumāra or 'Ku' for Kumāra Gupta I or Kumāra Gupta II and Skanda for Skanda Gupta. Though the name Deva Gupta is found in the Vākātaka inscriptions, as a personal name of Candra Gupta II, that name has never



been found on the coinage of that sovereign. This fact convincingly disproves the theory of Fleet and Vincent Smith. Rapson proposed that Kāca might have been a brother of Samudra Gupta, who must have reigned only for a short time after Candra Gupta I. The selection of Samudra Gupta by his father to succeed him renders this assumption also groundless. To read Kāca as Rāma and then to attribute these coins to Rāma Gupta, who will be later shown to have succeeded Samudra Gupta, is going too far. Who, then, was this prince Kāca? And how can we historically explain the existence of his coins?

Allan and Rayachaudhari adhere to the theory of identifying Kāca with Samudra Gupta. Aiyangar is not definite on this point. The choice of Samudra Gupta as heir-apparent made by Candra Gupta I, is clearly hinted at in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta. Another clear indication of such custom of selecting a successor is provided by the epithet तत्परि-  
गृहीत, which is always applied to Candra Gupta II, in the genealogical passages of the Gupta inscriptions. But there is a great deal of significant difference between these two references. In the Bhitari and the Mathura inscriptions of Candra Gupta II, the acceptance of Candra Gupta II, as a successor was the only thing mentioned. In the Allahabad pillar inscription, on the other hand, besides the reference to the selection of Samudra Gupta by his father, it has been clearly mentioned that the former was enviously looked at by his brethren. This fact may suggest that there was a slight rebellion on the part of Samudra Gupta's brothers after their father's death. In the same inscription, three stanzas, after the stanza आयो ह्येत्युपगृह्य etc, there is a passage full of many gaps; that passage perhaps refers to this rebellion. "....

..... conquered some by his arms in battle." This war is mentioned between the reference to Samudra Gupta's selection as a Yuvarāja on the one hand and to his first campaign against Āryāvarta, which is supposed to be his first great exploit, on the other. There is further on in the inscription, a mention that 'pride had changed into repentance' possibly referring to Samudra Gupta's brothers. All this seems to point to a civil war which must have been easily subdued by Samudra Gupta before the beginning of the great campaign. Many scholars believe that the sequence of events as mentioned by Harīṣeṇa, the author of the Allahabad pillar inscription, may not necessarily be chronologically correct and that this civil war may have broken out immediately after Samudra Gupta had set on his career of conquest. Harīṣeṇa, however, was a responsible officer under Samudra Gupta and thus could not have lost sight of any details in the sequence of important events in his master's career. It is more reasonable to suppose that some time elapsed between the selection of Samudra Gupta by Candra Gupta I, and the latter's death. This may have given time to Samudra Gupta's brothers to prepare for a war of succession. Candra Gupta I, presumably died somewhere on the other side of the Ganges when Samudra Gupta had left Pāṭaliputra in order to meet him. The brothers seized this opportunity and Kāca, the eldest brother, led his younger brothers in civil war. He was actually enthroned for some time, during which period he struck his own coins. The apparent inferiority of gold of Kāca's coins may also lead to the assumption of his hasty intrusion on the Magadha throne. The gaps in the Allahabad pillar inscription, which follow the stanza where we are told of Samudra Gupta's selection by his father to succeed him must necessarily have referred to

this war of succession and to Samudra Gupta's putting down of the instigator. Otherwise the historical significance of the reference in the inscription to the chagrin of Samudra Gupta's brethren will have been lost and the statement will be rendered unnecessary. The *biruda* सर्वराजोच्चेता is, according to Heras, an empty boast made by a pretender. The fact that Kāca was an usurper mainly barred the possibility of his being mentioned in the later genealogical lists of the Gupta inscriptions. Further, Gupta inscriptions usually omit the name of a prince who does not belong to the direct line of succession. The supposition that the coins bearing the name of Kāca are medals struck by Samudra Gupta in memory of his elder brother, Kāca, cannot be reconciled with the statement in the Allahabad pillar inscription referring to envy and ill'will which Samudra Gupta's brethren bore against him. Had there been any achievement of Kāca worthy of commemoration, it would certainly have been included in the Allahabad inscription. Kāca's rule in Magadha was short-lived and Samudra Gupta established himself on the throne almost immediately after the death of his father.

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## CHAPTER III

### CONSOLIDATION OF THE GUPTA IMPERIAL POWER: SAMUDRA GUPTA

Starting in 329-30 A. D. as the king of Magadha, which fact is clearly indicated by his early title, Rāja, and by the absence, on his early Tiger type coins, of any marks of royalty on his person, Samudra Gupta concluded his career with a proud satisfaction, which is recorded on his imperial gold coins, marked with his garuḍa, of having conquered the whole earth and thus having ultimately won the heaven : पृथिवीमवजित्य दिवं जयति अमरत्वार्थं वीर्यम्. The Allahabad pillar inscription ( A. P. inscription ), the Eran inscription, the Gaya copper-plate, which was unnecessarily regarded spurious by Fleet, but which was proved to be genuine, by R. D. Banerjee, on the basis of a mass of new evidence,—these inscriptions belonging to the period of Samudra Gupta, a large number of coins struck by him, and numerous references to him in other Gupta inscriptions, provide ample epigraphic and numismatic material for the reconstruction of the very eventful career of this most illustrious Gupta sovereign. Samudra Gupta was marked out for his abilities and was selected as heir-apparent by Candragupta I. He justified the choice of his father beyond expectation. Soon after his father's death, Samudra Gupta started to consolidate his power by conquering the small principalities, into which Northern India had then been divided. His aim was to bring about the political unification of India and make him-

self *ekarāt*. 'Unlike the *Bhārasīvas* and also the *Vākāṭakas*, to a certain extent, who were the worshippers of *Sīva*, the austere and sombre God of social asceticism, *Samudra Gupta* was a devotee of *Viṣṇu*, the God of royal splendour and traditional Hindu sovereignty, who builds and reigns and protects, and rejoices in plenty and bears in his hand the *cakra* which is the symbol of imperial power.' The remarkably ambitious programme of conquest, which *Samudra Gupta* followed, has been recorded in detail in the *Allahabad pillar inscription*. This is an undated inscription on a round monolith sandstone column, twenty-five feet in height, originally erected at *Kauśāmbī* and significantly selected by *Hariṣeṇa*, in view of the fact that it already bore an inscription of one of *Samudra Gupta*'s greatest predecessors, *Aśoka Maurya*. Fleet's assumption, based on a misinterpretation of a clause in the inscription, that it is a posthumous inscription of *Samudra Gupta* has been disproved by *Buehler*, who convincingly pointed out that the *Allahabad pillar inscription* must have been published before *Samudra Gupta* had performed the *aśvamedha*. Otherwise a mention of the *aśvamedha* sacrifice performed by *Samudra Gupta* would have certainly been made therein. The inscription is absolutely nonsectarian and is entirely devoted to the recital of the lineage, the conquests, and the glory of *Samudra Gupta*. It also throws considerable light on the political geography of India, the tribes of India, and the kings of India in the first half of the 4th century A. D.. The account of *Samudra Gupta*'s conquests given by the *Allahabad pillar inscription* is sufficiently corroborated by the *Purāṇas*, which, from certain points of view, form another and a richer source of the history of the Imperial Gupta period.

Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas continue the threads of Indian history where Matsya Purāṇa left them. The very fact that the Purāṇas stop with the Gupta period may suggest that they constitute more or less contemporary record.

The first eight stanzas of the Allahabad pillar inscription give us information with regard to the early education of Samudra Gupta and his preparation for the future exalted position for which he was destined. They speak of Samudra Gupta, as a young man. The first two stanzas are completely gone; the third one indicates that Samudra Gupta was an accomplished scholar in the field of letters. The fourth stanza, which is intact, is historically very important. It refers to the special selection of Samudra Gupta, by his father, from among several brothers, 'to conquer the land' and succeed him on the throne. A very poetic but compact expression is given by the poet to the mixed feelings of the assembly, in whose presence the announcement was made. The courtiers, though deeply touched by the approaching end of the old sovereign, were all the same enthusiastic in their admiration of the young prince. Quite contrary to this were the feelings of the brethren of the selected heir-apparent. The entire procedure produced jealousies in them. The next two stanzas, which are not available intact, must be referring, as shown elsewhere, to the consequent ill will and uprising on the part of Samudra Gupta's brothers, led by the eldest, Kāca. This war of succession, however, was successfully put an end to by the valiant prince, who thus adequately vindicated the choice of his wise father. The seventh and the eighth stanzas and the prose passage following them give complete details of Samudra Gupta's Vijaya - Yātrā, and the extent of his empire. We have to remember,

in this connection, that the writer of this inscription, Hariṣeṇa, was, besides being a poet of very high order, also a responsible officer of the state, as he himself mentions at the end of the inscription. He was therefore in close touch with the course of events and may be said to be writing 'a history on the pillar.' The sequence of Samudra Gupta's achievements as given by him must be taken to be historically authentic and the political geography, sufficiently accurate. It is not unlikely that Samudra Gupta himself revised the inscription before publication.

After putting down the rather unpleasant war which was picked up by his brothers, Samudra Gupta had first of all to encounter the princes belonging to the region in the neighbourhood of Magadha. These princes seem to have found proper opportunity to attack Samudra Gupta immediately after his father's death and the consequent war of succession. In line 13, only three kings of Northern India are said to have been defeated by Samudra Gupta. This was his first campaign in Āryāvarta. Acyuta was the ruler of Ahi-chatra, as a few coins, bearing his name, discovered in that locality, clearly indicate. The facts that his name is referred to in line 21 of the inscription as Acyutanandi, that his coins have the same symbols on them as on the Nāga coins of Padmāvatī and that they have similar fabric, indicate that he was a scion of the Nāgas, perhaps a distant descendant of the Bhārasiva imperial dynasty. He must have been naturally ambitious to regain the past glory of his own illustrious family. This could have been possible only by conquering the ever-prospering Gupta prince of Magadha. The other two kings seem to have had more personal reasons for advancing against Samudra Gupta. There was Koṭa-

kulaja. Rapson draws our attention to certain coins bearing the name *Koṭa*. These coins resemble the *Śrīta* coins attributed to a ruler of Śrāvastī and should be referred to that region. He was helped by Nāgasena. There is a reference to this Nāgasena in Harṣacarita of Bāṇa, नागकुलजनमनः सारिकाश्रावितमन्त्रस्य आसीद् नासो नागसेनस्य पद्मावत्याम्, which shows that he too was connected with the Nāga family. In Viṣṇu and Vāyu Purāṇas we are told that 'nine Nāga kings will enjoy the city of Campāvati and seven Nāgas will enjoy Mathurā.' Padmāvati and Campāvati are probably one and the same. It seems that Acyuta and Nāgasena belonged respectively to these two Nāga families mentioned in the Purāṇas. After the rebellion of Kāca was quenched, Koṭakulaja, Nāgasena and Acyuta, hoping to secure their independence, revolted against Samudra Gupta. The Allahabad inscription mentions that, in his first campaign in Āryāvarta, Samudra Gupta simply uprooted the three princes, evidently implying that he defeated them and put an end to their antagonistic attitude. As indicated elsewhere, Jayaswal believes that the Koṭakulaja mentioned in the inscription is identical with Kalyāṇavarman of Kaumudī-Mahotsava and that Nāgasena was his brother-in-law. Both of them apparently wanted to revenge themselves on Samudra Gupta, for his father's atrocities mentioned in the drama, and so took advantage of the difficult situation, in which Samudra Gupta was involved. This suggestion of Jayaswal has already been proved to be untenable. Jayaswal further believes that this battle against the three princes of Āryāvarta was fought at Kausāmbī, since it was the most convenient place where the kings of Ahicchatra, Mathurā and Padmāvati could meet. This is quite likely in view of the fact that the Allahabad column was originally



erected at that place. It is possible that the column was purposely erected on the site of the first victory of Samudra Gupta, during his Vijaya-Yātrā. This war gave the Gupta sovereign complete supremacy over the large tract of the Gangetic valley, from Oudh to Haradwar and Siwalik, and from Allahabad to Bhagalpur. Generally, historians speak of only one campaign of Samudra Gupta in Āryāvarta as the result of which he defeated nine kings named in line 21 of the Allahabad pillar inscription. A closer study of the inscription however points to two distinct campaigns. The first, which is referred to in line 13 of the inscription and which has been described above, took place in the beginning of Samudra Gupta's reign, immediately after the internal troubles were finally quenched. The second campaign in Āryāvarta, which is chronologically later, is mentioned after Samudra Gupta's famous expedition in the south. The consequent effects of these two campaigns in Āryāvarta were also different and distinct.

After having sufficiently consolidated his dominions round about Magadha, Samudra Gupta set on his victorious conquest of the south. The inscription mentions twelve kingdoms in Dakṣiṇāpatha, to the south of Narmadā and Māhiṣmatī, the kings of which were captured and later released by Samudra Gupta. While, in the north, Samudra Gupta played the part of a digvijayī, of the early Magadha type, in the south, he followed the ideal of a dharmavijayī. There he employed the policy more of conciliation than of aggression and annexation. The kings defeated by him in his southern campaign were: 1. Mahendra of Kosala, 2. Vyāghrarāja of Mahākāntāra, 3. Maṇṭarāja of Korala, 4. Mahendra of Piṣṭapura, 5. Swāmidatta of Girikoṭṭūra, 6. Damaṇa

of Eraṇḍapalla, 7. Viṣṇugopa of Kāñcī, 8. Nilarāja of Avamukta, 9. Hastivarman of Vengi, 10. Ugrasena of Palakka, 11. Kubera of Devarāṣṭra, and 12. Dhanañjaya of Kuṣṭhalapura. It must be noted, in this connection, that Bhandarkar (I. C. vol. II, No. 4) believes that the name of the king of Piṣṭapura was Mahendragiri, and that of the king of Koṭṭūra was Swāmidatta. He assumes that the name of one country only is attached to the name of one king, and further that any other division of the clause goes against the rules of grammar. Moreover it has now been ascertained that the names of several other kings of the south end in *giri*. In Āndhradeśa, for instance, there was a king of the name of Komaragiri (Kumāragiri?) belonging to the Reddis of Koṇḍaviḍu, who was a feudatory of the Kākatīyas. Bhandarkar's reading of the passage divided as पैष्टपुरकमहेन्द्रगिरि and कौटूरकस्वामिदत्त seems therefore to be certainly preferable to Fleet's original reading of the passage divided as पैष्टपुरकमहेन्द्र and गिरिकौटूरकस्वामिदत्त.

Even as early as the time of the momentous publication of Fleet's complete volume of Gupta inscriptions, many of the above-mentioned places could be almost correctly identified. Several attempts have since then been made to settle the precise geographical position of all these places. Only after fixing up the political geography of India at that time, shall we be enabled to trace correctly the route of Samudra Gupta's march into and back from Dakṣiṇāpātha and thus to realise properly the extent of his empire. Bhandarkar (I. H. Q.) understands Kosala of the inscription to refer particularly to south Kosala, one of whose earliest capitals was Śrīpura or modern Sirpur in Central Provinces. This region seems, on the consideration of Tivaradeva's inscription, to have

included the eastern and southern parts of Central Provinces, comprising the districts of Bilaspur, Raipur and Sambalpur. Leaving the Jumna valley, Samudra Gupta presumably passed through Rewa State and Jubbulpore district, defeated Mahendra of Kosala and then entered the forest-countries, which still retain their ancient wilderness and constitute the Eastern Gondavana forests. This Mahākāntāra has to be distinguished from Sarvāṭavi. In Mahākāntāra, Samudra Gupta vanquished Vyāghrarāja, who appears to be the same as the one mentioned in Nechne-Ki-Talai and Ganja inscriptions of the Vākātaka Mahārāja. He was the father of Jayanātha of Uchakalpa family. The latter's date is 174 Kalacuri era, which makes him a contemporary of Candra Gupta II. His father, Vyāghrarāja, must have, therefore, been a contemporary of Samudra Gupta. He was undoubtedly a feudatory of the Vākātakas. Jayaswal however identifies Mahākāntāra with Kanker and Bastar. After having conquered these regions among the Vindhya in the eastern half of the peninsula, Samudra Gupta emerged in Korala and then passed on to Piṣṭapura and Koṭṭūra. Kielhorn believed that Korala was a misnomer for Kuṇāla, which is mentioned in the Aihole inscription as having been reduced by Pulakesin II. Jayaswal seems to identify it with Colair lake. It is read as Keraḷa by many scholars and is identified with Sonpur district in Central Provinces. This latter identification suggested by Bhandarkar is probably correct in view of the geographical position of Mahākosala, Mahākāntāra and Keraḷa. Barnett identifies it with Korada. Piṣṭapura is modern Pitthapuram in Godavari district of Madras Presidency. Having put down Mahendragiri, the king of that region, Samudra Gupta proceeded against Swāmidatta of Koṭṭūra, that is

of modern Kothoor in Ganjam district. Aiyangar, however, thinks that Kottūra is to be identified with the district of Coimbatore. The close neighbours of Mahendragiri and Swāmidatta were the princes of Eraṇḍapalla and Devarāṣṭra. Scholars were inclined in the past to believe that these kings, Damaṇa of Eraṇḍapalla and Kubera of Devarāṣṭra, were vanquished by Samudra Gupta on his way back to Āryāvarta. They accordingly identified these places with Eraṇḍola in Khandesh and Mahārāṣṭra respectively. Y. R. Gupte insists on his agreement with Fleet. He asserts that the district of East Khandesh, in which present Eraṇḍol is situated, abounds in remains of the Gupta period. In Devarāṣṭra were apparently included at that time, according to him, parts of Khanapur and Karad Taluks in Bombay Presidency, the name Devarāṣṭra still surviving in the name of a village, Devarāṭhe, in Khanapur Taluk of Satara District. The first objection that may be urged against this view refers to the sequence of Samudra Gupta's conquests. If we accept the views of Fleet and Gupte, Eraṇḍapalla and Devarāṣṭra should have been mentioned in the list of kingdoms given in the inscription, after the southernmost provinces, namely, Vengi and Kāñci. Samudra Gupta cannot be supposed to have returned to south after having first conquered Western India. It would be an awkward procedure first to start in the southern direction, then to turn to the west, and again finally go to the southernmost regions. Secondly, with the discovery of Palakka in Nellore district, it becomes difficult to understand how Samudra Gupta could conquer Mahārāṣṭra and Khandesh without first passing through and conquering the intervening Kanarese districts. Eraṇḍapalla, as shown by Jouveau Dubreuil, is the name of a place mentioned in Siddhānta plates of Devendra-

varman of Kalinga (E. I. XII); and Devarāṣṭra is mentioned in a set of copper plates discovered in Kasim Kota, as the name of a district in Kalinga. Those places are therefore to be identified with Yellamanchili tract in Vizagapattam district. From Eraṇḍapalla to Kāñcī is a big jump. Assuming however that the sequence, in which these kingdoms and their kings are mentioned in the inscription, correctly corresponds with the actual sequence of conquests, in the course of Samudra Gupta's southern campaign, it appears that, after putting down the prince of Eraṇḍapalla, which is identified with a part of Kalinga, the Gupta sovereign directly advanced towards Kāñcī, his southernmost destination. J. Debreuil is of opinion that 'Samudra Gupta first subjugated, in his scheme of conquest, some kings, but very soon encountered superior forces, and was therefore obliged to relinquish his conquests and return rapidly to his state.' It is not possible to corroborate this view on the basis of any epigraphic evidence. The very nature of Samudra Gupta's campaign in the south, which was characterised by the policy of capture and release, does not give rise to the question of capitulation of conquered territories. It is quite probable that Samudra Gupta advanced as far as Vengi and Kāñcī and defeated Hastivarman and Viṣṇugopa. J. Debreuil has certainly succeeded in proving that Samudra Gupta never went beyond Kāñcī; the conquest of Coimbatore and Malbar districts of Madras presidency, and of Mahārāṣṭra and Khandesh ascribed to Samudra Gupta was based on the misunderstanding of certain geographical names. As it would not have been possible for Samudra Gupta to go to Kāñcī without having first encountered the king of Vengi, it seems that he was opposed, in that part of Dakṣiṇā-patha, by a confederacy of Pallava kings headed by

Viṣṇugopa of Kāñcī and Hastivarman of Vengi. Avamuktaka must have been a small principality in the neighbourhood of Kāñcī and Vengi. The majority of scholars have left Avamuktaka as not to be easily identified. Jayaswal, however, sees some similarity in that name and the name of Avā province, whose capital was Pithunda. A critical examination of the inscriptions of Pallava dynasty points to the identification of Viṣṇugopa of Kāñcī with the brother of Siṃhavarman I, and the guardian of Siṃhavarman II. Hastivarman of Vengi has been identified by Hultzsch with Attivarman of the family of king Kandar belonging to the Pallava race. This is more likely than Aiyangar's supposition that Hastivarman was a Śālaṅkāyana chieftain of Ellore Taluk. These three princes, Viṣṇugopa of Kāñcī, Nilarāja of Avamuktaka, and Hastivarman of Vengi, seem to have come together to give battle to Samudra Gupta. It is further likely that two more neighbouring princes, Kubera of Devarāṣṭra and Ugrasena of Palakka, also joined them later. Such supposition alone will possibly explain the order in which their names have been mentioned in the inscription. Palakka has so far been identified, following the lead given by Vincent Smith, with Palghat or Palakkadu to the south of Malabar district. This view was disproved by J. Dubreuil's definite statement that Samudra Gupta never went to Malabar side and was therefore later abandoned by Vincent Smith himself, who consequently found that Palakka was the name of a place in Nellore district. Venkayya assumes that this Palakka of the Allahabad inscription is the same as the capital of that name situated to the south of Kṛṣṇā and mentioned in many Pallava copper-plates. It must be conceded that Palakka was in any case in Nellore District. With Palakka in Nellore district and Eraṇḍa-

palla and Devaṛāṣṭra on the eastern coast, the probability of a wide southern conquest by Samudra Gupta becomes questionable. Samudra Gupta was victorious in this great war which he had to fight with a number of princes together and seems to have started, immediately thereafter, to return to Magadha. His progress in Southern India was swift and profitable. The last-mentioned place in the list, Kuṣṭhalapura, has not been so far satisfactorily identified. Barnett believes that it is Kuttalur near Polur in North Arcot. If, however, we accept Aiyangar's view that it is the same as the region round about the river Kuśasthālī, it is very likely that Samudra Gupta conquered that principality on his way back. There appears to be no hint given in the inscription itself of the formation of the three confederacies in Southern India of which Jayaswal speaks (J. H. I.) viz, (1) Mahākosala and Mahākāntāra, (2) Kurala, Koṭṭūra and Eraṇḍapalla, and (3) all the remaining ones under Viṣṇugopa. The geographical positions of Vengi and Kāñci demands only one confederacy; and its formation can be reasonably explained on the ground that Viṣṇugopa and Hastivarman were both scions of the same race.

It is not little surprising that Allahabad pillar inscription contains very little reference to the Vākāṭakas who must have been the predominant power in the region between Bundelkhanda and Kaṛṇāṭa. Samudra Gupta's Vākāṭaka contemporary was Rudrasena I (344-48 A. D.) who is said to have been the same as Rudradeva, who was killed by Samudra Gupta in the second campaign in Āryāvarta. The inscriptions of his son, Prthviṣeṇa I, who was also a younger contemporary of Samudra Gupta, show that the country to the south of Jumna and to the southwest of the Vindhya was included in the

Vākāṭaka territory. Even after having annexed extensive region in the neighbourhood of Magadha as the result of the first campaign in the Āryāvarta, Samudra Gupta seems to have avoided the Jumna valley, which was under the domination of the Vākāṭakas, and to have decided upon attacking the south-eastern end of the Vākāṭaka empire. It was, from the military point of view, a wise step. The absence of any reference to Rudrasena's son, Prthviṣeṇa I, Vākāṭaka (348-375 A. D.), in the Allahabad pillar inscription, is explained by the fact that Samudra Gupta's martial operations were confined to the eastern part of the trans-Vindhyan India. There is no reliable evidence to show that Samudra Gupta ever led his armies to the central and western parts of the Deccan, which seem to have been left to the Vākāṭaka king, Prthviṣeṇa I, to be ruled by him unhindered. The fact that no place in that region is mentioned in the list of conquered principalities in the Allahabad pillar inscription indicates that presumably there was an alliance between the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas, after the death of Rudrasena I, in the course of the second Āryāvarta campaign. Prthviṣeṇa I, appears to have surrendered and to have been made a subordinate ally by Samudra Gupta. He was thus allowed to rule independently in his own territories. The general policy followed by Samudra Gupta in his conquest of Dakṣiṇāpātha would support this assumption. The Eran inscription of Samudra Gupta, however, makes it clear that Samudra Gupta did deprive the Vākāṭakas of their possession in the north-east corner of Malwa. According to that inscription, Samudra Gupta seems to have established a few monuments at Eran, then known as Airikīṇa, now a village in Sagar district of the Central Provinces. It was after



this event that Prthviṣeṇa I, Vākātaka accepted the position of a subordinate ally and was thus allowed to enjoy the possession of his southern kingdom.

Troublous times were awaiting Samudra Gupta on his return to the home-province. Taking advantage of his absence from Āryāvarta during his expedition through Dakṣiṇāpatha, Acyuta and Nāgasena, whose rebellious attitude was once put an end to by Samudra Gupta, in his first Āryāvarta campaign, made alliance with several other princes of the North, who were continually in danger of being attacked by the victorious monarch of Magadha. In line 21 of the Allahabad pillar inscription, a number of kings of Āryāvarta, namely, Rudradeva, Matila, Nāgadatta, Caṇḍavarman, Gaṇapati Nāga, Nāgasena, Acyuta Nandi and Balavarman, are said to have been completely exterminated by Samudra Gupta. This was his second campaign in Āryāvarta. The most prominent among the above-mentioned kings was Rudradeva, who is correctly identified, first by K. N. Dikshit and then by Jayaswal and others, with Rudrasena I of the Vākātaka dynasty. He was reigning at the real centre of the Vākātaka dominions between Jumna and Vidiśā, viz, Bundelkhand. Matila is known from a clay seal discovered in Bulandshahr (I. A. XVIII). The names of Nāgadatta and Gaṇapati Nāga suggest that they too were, like Acyuta and Nāgasena, scions of the Nāga family, which once held sway over a large territory in Āryāvarta. A few coins of Gaṇapati of the Nāgavamśa are discovered at Narwar and Besnagar. Jayaswal proposes the identification of Nāgadatta with the father of Mahārāja Maheśvara Nāga, a Nāga chieftain of the 4th century A. D., whose seal with the Nāga Lāñchana was discovered at Lahore and was published by Fleet. Caṇḍa-

varman was the king of Puṣkaraṇa, who is mentioned in the Sisunia rock inscription. The very fact that the king of Pokharana in south Rajputana had his own inscription recorded on the Sisunia rock in the province, which was already in possession of the Guptas, shows that that aggressive ruler made an incursion in Samudra Gupta's territory and set up his own inscription on a rock over there, as a result of his temporary success. Balavarman cannot be the second name of the Koṭakulaja since the latter prince was already vanquished during the first campaign in Āryāvarta. He might have been the king of that name of Assam, who was ninth in ascent from Bhāskaravarman, the contemporary of Harṣa-wardhana, and the grandson of Puṣyavarman, the founder of that dynasty (E. I. Vol. XII). Here again there seems to be no suggestion in the inscription to the effect that all the above-mentioned princes confederated and gave a battle, the biggest battle in that case, to Samudra Gupta. There must necessarily have been several military engagements, big and small, in which Samudra Gupta vanquished a number of kings in Āryāvarta. This gave him extensive territories in Northern India excluding a few districts around Agra and Dehli and in the Punjab. The fact that no kings from Bengal have been mentioned in the Allahabad inscription seems to suggest that there were few left after the foundation of the Gupta sovereignty by Candragupta I. The actual conquest of all these provinces in Northern India, mentioned in the inscription, resulted, as a matter of course, in the submission of the Āṭavikas or the forest tribes. Though no definition of the term is available, it seems to refer to the wild tribes of Vindhyaṭavī from Mathurā to Narmadā, comprising Bundelkhand, Bhagelkhand, and Riwa.

The later wars in Āryāvarta seem to mark the end of Samudra Gupta's glorious martial activities. Line 22 of the inscription is almost clear on this point. The victorious career of Samudra Gupta in Northern and Southern India made a deep impression on the प्रत्यंत-नृपतिs who are mentioned in the inscription, namely, the princes of Samatata, Davāka, Kāmarūpa, Nepāla, and Kartipura. The term प्रत्यंतनृपति may denote either the kings within the frontiers of Samatata and the following provinces or the kings and chieftains just outside their frontiers. Did Samudra Gupta's empire include these territories? Or was it only bounded by their frontiers? Samatata, Davāka, Kāmarūpa and Nepāla are four kingdoms on the eastern frontier in order from the bay of Bengal to the Himālayas. Samatata is south-east Bengal, Kāmarūpa is lower Assam and Nepāla was the same as of today. In Nepāla, Jayadeva I, the new Licchavi king, was a relative of Samudra Gupta on his mother's side, and his submission meant practically the submission of all Himalayan states. Davāka has been identified by Fleet with modern Dacca. Vincent Smith believes that the name refers to the districts of Bogra, Dinajpur, and Rajshahi. It is more probable that it should refer, as Bhandarkar points out, to the hill-tracts of Chittagong and Tiperrah. The identification of Kartipura has all along been a veritable problem for the historians. Vincent Smith takes it to indicate the kingdom occupying the lower ranges of the Himālayas, including Kumaon, Garhwal, and Kangra. According to Fleet, Kartipura is modern Kartarpur in Jallundhar district. These countries indicate almost accurately the northern and eastern limits of the zone of Samudra Gupta's imperial influence. The northern part of the Gangetic delta seems to have been included in the

empire of Samudra Gupta. These frontier kings fully gratified the commands of Samudra Gupta by giving all taxes, obeying all orders and performing necessary obsequies. By the side of these प्रत्यन्त kings, there are mentioned, in the Allahabad pillar inscription, a number of other tribes like those of Mālavas, Ārjunāyanas and others, not necessarily because, as Vincent Smith believes, all of them were on the frontiers of Samudra Gupta's empire, but, perhaps, because the procedure of their submission was similar to that of other frontier kings. The Mālavas are decidedly the Malloi of Alexander's historians. Today there is a Malva in the south-eastern Punjab. The Mālavas are known, from their copper coins, to have continued to exist as a tribal republic for nearly four centuries. These copper coins are to be found over a very large area starting from a valley of the Sutlej down to the banks of Narmadā. According to Cunningham, the dates of these coins range from 250 B.C. to 350 A.D.. The Mālava tribal coinage suddenly comes to an end about the middle of the 4th century A. D., which fact indicates that they must have been vanquished, at that time, by Samudra Gupta. The Yaudheyas still survive in the Punjab and Sind. Parts of Bhawalpur state and Multan district are still called Johiāwār. Like the Mālava tribal coinage, the Yaudheya coinage also comes to a sudden end in the 4th century A. D.. Ārjunāyanas, who are connected with the Pāṇḍava tribes, together with the Yaudheyas (compare Yaudheya and Yudhiṣṭhira and Ārjunāyanas and Arjuna), are mentioned by Ptolemy to have settled in the Punjab. Madrakas had their capital at Sākala in the Punjab and Ābhīras ruled in some parts of western Rājputana. A chieftain of the Sanakānika tribe has been mentioned as a feudatory of Candragupta II, in

Udayagiri cave inscription near Besnagar-the old Vidisā. The Kākas must have inhabited the region near-about Bhilsa, as the name of modern Kākapura indicates. The Sāñci hill also is called Kākanada. The Prārjunas are located by Vincent Smith in Narasingpur district and the Kharpārikas are, according to Bhandarkar, probably identical with Kharpur mentioned in the Batihagarh inscription of Damoh district. These and other tribes, which inhabited southern Punjab and northern Rajputana, in the 4th century A. D., submitted to the overlordship of Samudra Gupta, paid 'all' imperial 'taxes', and their kings, presumably presented themselves in person before the Emperor (Line 22 of the inscription).

The Allahabad pillar inscription goes on further to mention the fact that many distant monarchs, in farther west and south, also had come under the influence of Samudra Gupta's imperial power. It is more correct to take Daivaputra Sāhi Sāhānusāhi as one single word designating some later great Kuṣāṇa king. The titles are employed necessarily to distinguish the Kuṣāṇa emperor from the Sassanian sovereign, who was, at that time, the next neighbour of the Gupta empire. The Kuṣāṇa emperor reigned over the Kabul valley and it is quite possible that some of the frontier tribes, which are mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription, owed allegiance as much to Kuṣāṇas as to the Guptas. In spite of the submission of the Kuṣāṇa sovereign, he seems to have been left with potential power for mischief, for, soon after Samudra Gupta's death the Śakādhipati raised the banner of revolt against the Guptas as will be seen later. The racial name Saka has been taken to refer to the western Ksatrapas of Kathiawar and Malwa. Marshall has discovered an inscription at Sāñci which points to the victorious reign of a Śaka ruler called Śrī-

dharavarman. It bears the date 241, which is equivalent to 319 A. D. It is possible that this Śrīdharavarman or his successor is the Saka king mentioned in Samudra Gupta's inscription. The Muruṇḍas are, according to Sylvain Levi and Allan, of foreign origin. Sten Konow believes that Muruṇḍas were in reality identical with the Kuṣāṇas themselves and that the term Muruṇḍa itself is not the name of a tribe but a Śaka title meaning 'Lord'. An account of the embassy of a Ceylon king, Meghavarṇa, has been preserved by Chinese tradition, which says that he 'sent gifts to Samudra Gupta with a request to be allowed to build a monastery at Bodha Gayā, for the convenience of pilgrims from Ceylon'. This request was duly granted. The submission of these distant monarchs was characterised by respectful service on their part, the agreement to sacrifice for the sake of the emperor, the presents of maidens, the soliciting of imperial Sāsana and coinage and the surrender of territories. गदस्मदङ्क in line 24 of the inscription is taken by Fleet to refer to the coinage of the Guptas. The kings, who accepted the suzerainty of Samudra Gupta, begged for Sāsana (permission) for the use of the Garuḍa coins in their own provinces. Allan observes, on the other hand, that गदस्मदङ्क is not a coin of any kind. The dynasty, mentioned on their coins as Gadahara and classed by Vincent Smith among later great Kuṣāṇas and among the little Yue-Chi, did mint coins with the name and figure of Samudra Gupta on the obverse. Samudra Gupta was very particular about his imperial coinage. He allowed the Gāndhāra Śakas the privilege of using on their coins the Gupta marks. Samudra Gupta is further said to have established again many royal families, who had fallen and were deprived of their sovereignty.

In this context, it is interesting to note that pieces of sculpture, dating back to the 4th century A. D., which bear the stamp of Vākātaka-Gupta art, as well as temples of the Gupta type belonging to the same period are discovered in Cambodia. Similarly the introduction and adaptation of Gupta script in Burma and the large finds of Gupta terracottas in those regions are also very suggestive (J. H. I.). These facts clearly indicate how, in times of Samudra Gupta, many parts of Greater India were under the cultural, if not directly political, domination of the Guptas. Samudra Gupta fulfilled in every respect, the Hindu Ideal of Imperialism. His dominions included the ancestral territory of Bihar and Orissa, the United Provinces, Madras Presidency as far south as Kāñci, the greater half of Central India, on the eastern side, and a considerable portion of Rajputana extending to the frontier of Bhawalpur, the northern frontiers continuing along the banks of Jhelum and Chinab to the frontiers of Kashmir.

The identification of Samudra Gupta with Dharmāditya of a Faridpur grant is clearly wrong. The only epigraphic record of Samudra Gupta, which gives us any date, is the Gayā copperplate which is dated in the 9th year, almost certainly, of the Gupta era. Only a fragment of another inscription on a red sandstone square block has been discovered near the ruined temple of the Boar at Eran. The name of Samudra Gupta has been recorded therein. The first part must be mentioning some of his ancestors. No reference, however, to any of his successors has been made, which fact evidently shows that the record belongs to Samudra Gupta's times. Judging from its shape and appearance, the block seems to be a part of a temple. Cunningham suggested that if it had been attached to any of the exist-

ing ruins, it must have belonged very probably to the temple of a colossal figure of Viṣṇu, immediately at the north of the temple of the Boar. All verses in this Eran inscription refer, according to Jayaswal, to Samudra Gupta, though Fleet entertains doubts about the seventh verse. 'The lacunae in this verse', observes Fleet, 'render it impossible to say whether here, and below, the word, स्व - his own - , refers to Samudra Gupta or to some feudatory of his, who may have been mentioned here'. In the fourth verse, it is obviously the words in the instrumental case, viz, भक्तित्वविक्रमतोषितेन etc, and not the words in the nominative case, that refer to Samudra Gupta. It is more adequate to think of Samudra Gupta being pleased by the devotion and valour of some feudatory and granting him the title of Mahārāja and Rājan. Verse 5, again, cannot refer to Samudra Gupta's wife. Jayaswal says in this connection, 'Wife was never so honoured, as Samudra Gupta honoured Dattadevi. In the greatest moment of his triumph at Eran, the Emperor of All India remembered his Life-partner.' Fleet has, however, pointed out that metre prevents Dattadevi being mentioned by name in that verse. She would not further be described as being surrounded by sons and grandsons. The verse very probably refers to the wife of the feudatory. It was this feudatory and not his overlord who had set up this record. Perhaps he built a temple at the desire of Samudra Gupta and then published this generally glorificatory inscription. The constant mention of 'war' in this inscription is significant and clearly indicates that the province was bravely snatched away by Samudra Gupta, very probably from the Vākātaka ruler.

As a very fitting monument to his remarkably glorious career of conquest, Samudra Gupta, after his digvijaya



in the North, and dharmavijaya in the South, seems to have performed the As'vamedha sacrifice. That he did perform the As'vamedha sacrifice is evidenced by the As'vamedha type of coins issued by Samudra Gupta and also by his epithet, चिरोत्सवाश्वमेधाहर्ता, in the inscriptions of his descendants. In the Poona plates of his granddaughter, Prabhāvatiguptā Vākātaka, he is even called अनेकाश्वमेधयाजी, which boast, however, seems to be unfounded. Had Samudra Gupta performed many As'vamedha sacrifices, his successors would have emphatically mentioned the fact in their official records. ) Moreover, a few mistakes, which seem to have crept in the inscription of Prabhāvatiguptā Vākātaka, make the authoritativeness of that inscription rather doubtful. Further, H. R. Divekar suggests (A. B. O. R. I. VII) that Samudra Gupta performed the As'vamedha very late in his career, that is, after the publication of the Allahabad pillar inscription. The facts that the epithet चिरोत्सवाश्वमेधाहर्ता, which is invariably applied to Samudra Gupta's name, is not found in the Allahabad pillar inscription, and that the line 26 of the inscription, which reads कृपणदीनानाथातुरजनोद्धरणसन्नदीक्षाभ्युपगतमनसः etc., indicates his intention of performing a sacrifice, most convincingly prove that the As'vamedha sacrifice was performed after the inscription on the Allahabad column. It is doubtful, therefore, whether the Gupta emperor had enough time left to him to perform several As'vamedha sacrifices. His title, अनेकाश्वमेधयाजी, in the grant of Prabhāvatiguptā cannot therefore be reasonably justified. It is not unlikely that Samudra Gupta got the inspiration of performing the As'vamedha from his connections with the southern countries, which may rightly be called the 'land of Vedic customs'. There were several sovereigns before Samudra Gupta—Puṣyāmītra of the Śuṅga dynasty, Khāravela of Kalinga,

Sātakarṇi of the Śātavāhanas, Pravarasena I, of the Vākātaka dynasty, and Bhavanāga of the Bhārasīva dynasty—who are known to have performed the As'vamedha sacrifice. The word चिरोत्सन्न, therefore, is to be understood not in the sense 'long extinct', but, following the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, in the sense that the sacrifice had lost many of the original elements which constituted it. Samudra Gupta's As'vamedha was duly preceded by Digvijaya. He alone could, therefore, claim to have celebrated a fullfledged imperial sacrifice, the As'vamedha of the true epic style, which was in abeyance for long.

About seven types of coins are attributed to the great Samudra Gupta. A critical examination of these coins points out that the credit of the reform in the coinage of Northern India clearly belongs to Samudra Gupta. On his earliest coins, there is Vyāghraparākrama on the obverse (which may incidentally suggest that young Samudra Gupta was greatly fond of hunting) and only the legend, Rāja Samudra, on the reverse. Most of the legends on the obverse of Samudra Gupta's coins seem to have been picked up from the inscription of Hariṣeṇa on the Allahabad column. The standard type shows on the obverse the legend, समरशतवित्तविजयो जिताश्विराजितो दिवं जयति, and only the most significant word, पराक्रम, is incised on the reverse. It is evident that Samudra Gupta's standard type is a close copy of the later coins of the Kuṣāṇa type, retaining the figure of the standing king. Practically the only alterations, apart from the legends, are on the obverse, where Kuṣāṇa peaked cap is displaced by a close-fitting cap, while the trident on the left gives place to a Garuḍa standard, which is the emblem of Viṣṇu. The king's name is still written vertically. The same is the case with regard to his other types, such as, the Archer type and the battle-

axe type. The lyrist type may indicate Samudra Gupta's proficiency in fine arts. This unique achievement of his is corroborated by a reference, in the first part of the Allahabad pillar inscription, to Nārada, which suggests the musical talent of Samudra Gupta. The Tiger, the Lyrist, the Archer, and the battle-axe may have been freak types struck on special occasions, in addition to ordinary standard type issued for ordinary circulation. A large flow of gold, in Magadha, from the south, after his conquests over there appears to have made it possible for Samudra Gupta to mint several types of gold coins and medals. The sense of proud fulfilment of an ambitious career is suggested by the legend on the obverse of the Aśvamedha type, राजाधिराजः पृथिवीमवजित्य दिवं जयति अमृतिवार्धवीर्यः. The 'marriage' coins and the Kāca coins have already been historically interpreted. Samudra Gupta, on account of this large variety of his coin-types, may be properly regarded as the pioneer of Hindu coinage.

A striking study of Samudra Gupta's personality is given by the Mahāyāna Buddhist author of Mañju-srīmūlakalpa, who says that the list of the imperial Guptas starts with the name of Samudra Gupta, 'a lord, superman, severe, ever vigilant, mindful about himself, unmindful about the hereafter, the sacrificer of animals.' Samudra Gupta did not overdo militarism. His southern conquests are an evidence of a continuous policy of peace. As Aiyangar puts it, 'it is most unjust to describe him as a Napoleon, who regarded kingdom-taking as the duty of the kings.' His actions, military and diplomatic, were all well-regulated by law. His policy of peace and reconciliation, his general colonial policy and his control of the parts of the country which brought him immense wealth and prosperity, his emphasis on sea-frontiers,

his philanthropy, which is adequately suggested by the epithet धनद, his evident scrupulousness in taxing people as lightly as possible—these are the characteristics which speak very eloquently of the lofty and magnanimous personality of Samudra Gupta, both as man and as king. The political administration in his times is indicated by the titles of Hariṣeṇa in the Allahabad pillar inscription and by the Eran inscription. His catholic and eclectic attitude regarding religion is suggested by the fact that he readily granted the request of the embassy from Ceylon to build a monastery for pilgrims. There was a unique revival of Hindu religion and Sanskrit culture under him. His musical accomplishments have already been referred to. His poetical genius is shown by the epithets in the Allahabad pillar inscription, निश्चितविदग्धमतिगान्धर्व-कलितैः ब्रीडितान्निदशपतिगुदः and विद्वज्जोषजीव्यनैककाव्यक्रियाभिः प्रतिष्ठित-कविराजशब्दः. The term कविराज is a technical term and usually indicates proficiency in more than one language. Though his poetical works are not now available, the high level of poetic genius of the time is quite evident from the prasasti of Hariṣeṇa. We know from the inscription that Dattadevi was the chief queen of Samudra Gupta—his Agramahiṣī and Paṭṭamahādevī. Samudra Gupta, who was rightly called Parākramāṅka, had thus reached the highwater-mark of Hindu imperialistic ideal and had almost created a 'New Nation'. Since the earliest date of Candragupta II, on the newly discovered Mathura inscription, is 380 A. D., and since the earliest known date of Samudra Gupta, on the Gaya copperplate, is 329 A. D., it is certain that Samudra Gupta's regime was very long, as it was also very eventful. It appears that he ruled from 328-29 A. D. to 377-78 A. D..

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ACME OF THE GUPTA GLORY : CANDRA GUPTA II VIKRAMĀDITYA

The scope of literature as a source of history is usually regarded as restricted, in the sense that literary works are often drawn upon only in order to supplement and confirm the historical material already provided by the more reliable epigraphic records. But some times it happens that an important historical detail, not already known from inscriptions, is first brought to light through a literary source and is thereafter sought to be corroborated by means of some inscriptional evidence. A typical case in point is that of Samudra Gupta's successor on the Gupta imperial throne. The Gupta inscriptions invariably mention Candra Gupta II as the immediate successor of Samudra Gupta. But new light has been thrown on the question of the genealogy and the succession of the Early Imperial Guptas through the discovery of a Sanskrit play, *Devicandragupta*, by Visākha-datta. The work was first noticed by Sylvain Levi (*Journal Asiatique*), who published a few fragments of that long-lost historical drama quoted in the newly discovered work on dramaturgy, by Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra, called *Nāṭyadarpaṇa*. This *Nāṭyadarpaṇa* was restored, a few years ago, in a collection of books at Khambhāyat. Like other works on dramaturgy, this work of Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra also quotes passages from several Sanskrit dramatic works, in order to illustrate various canons of dramatic science. It is from such passages that *Devicandragupta* was first brought to the

notice of Sanskrit scholars. Some fragments of this historical drama are also preserved in the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* of Bhoja. The extracts of this newly discovered drama, *Devicandragupta*, begin with the second act, where it is stated that Rāma Gupta agreed to give away his queen, Dhruvadevī, to the Śakas, in order to remove the apprehension of his subjects. It appears that the Śaka king had demanded Rāma Gupta's legally married wife, Dhruvadevī, and that Rāma Gupta, being a coward, had actually consented to send her over to the Śakādhipati. The extracts contain a long dialogue between Rāma Gupta and Dhruvadevī, in which Rāma Gupta states that he is sending her away for the sake of the people. Dhruvadevī then complains of her husband's heartlessness. Later on, Prince Candragupta determines to go to the Śaka king in the disguise of Dhruvadevī. Candragupta ultimately kills the Śaka king through this stratagem. It is indicated by the extract from the concluding portion of the play that after the destruction of the Śakas, Candragupta murdered his brother, Rāma Gupta, and married his widow, Dhruvadevī. The author of this play, Viśākhadatta, is very likely the same as the author of *Mudrārāksasa*. It may be possible that he was actually a contemporary of Candragupta II, as suggested by Hillebrandt, Tawney, Vincent Smith, and Jayaswal, and was thus an eyewitness of the events represented in *Devicandragupta*.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Jayaswal adds that the author of *देवीचन्द्रगुप्त* was a younger contemporary of Candragupta II. According to him the work was not published during the author's own life-time. Winternitz, on the other hand, gives 6th. century A. D. as the date of *विशखदत्त*. Dasgupta (I. C. October 1937) sees no difficulty in supposing that the poet wrote the drama in Candragupta's life-time. He argues that Candragupta II's act was

That the Candra Gupta of this play is Candra Gupta II, is proved by the fact that the name of Candra Gupta II's queen given in the Gupta records and the name of Rāma Gupta's widow, whom Candra Gupta is represented, in the drama, to have married after murdering his brother, are one and the same. It is also further confirmed, as will be shown later, by much literary and epigraphic evidence. Historically the significant facts which can be gathered, through a critical study of Devicandragupta, though the play is not yet available in its complete form, are :

(1). Samudra Gupta was succeeded by his eldest son, Rāma Gupta, who was a weak and cowardly monarch.

(2). A contemporary Śaka king could impose a humiliating peace on Rāma Gupta compelling him to surrender his wife, Dhruvadevī.

(3). Rāma Gupta's younger brother, Candra Gupta, went to the Śakapati in the disguise of Dhruvadevī and killed him.

(4). Rāma Gupta was later murdered by Candra Gupta.

(5). Candra Gupta married Dhruvadevī, the widow of Rāma Gupta.

(6). The whole incident was so well-known that Viśakhadatta dramatised it and no less than four different authors referred to it.

Bāṇa (circa 620 A. D.) is chronologically the earliest author, who seems to have referred to this historically

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'morally not quite indefensible, nor was it socially illegal.' Further there is nothing unusual in introducing, in the drama the courtesan, who is supposed to have given shelter to the king. In the भरतवाक्य of सुद्राक्षस, the word, Candra Gupta, is found in the majority of manuscripts and the fact that there he is referred to as दन्तमुत्तम may have some historical significance.

authentic event in the Gupta history. The passage in the Harṣacarita, which records the stories, narrated by Harṣa's commandant of elephants, Skandagupta, of kings, who, through carelessness, fell a prey to the machinations of their enemies, is full of references to earlier political events, which are exceedingly important from the point of view of ancient Indian history. One such political episode included in that passage is definitely known to be connected with the Imperial Gupta sovereign, Candra Gupta II. The relevant passage runs: परकल्लवकासुकं कामिनीवेषगुप्तः चन्द्रगुप्तः शकपतिमासातयत्, Candra Gupta II's raid on the Śaka capital and the extermination of the Śaka king by him, in the disguise of a lady were thus known to Bāṇa. Śaṅkarārya (1713 A. D.), the commentator on Harṣacarita, makes the reference clearer by stating that the Śakapati was killed in private by Candra Gupta disguised as his brother's wife and surrounded by men, dressed like women, because the former coveted Dhruvadevī, the wife of Rāma Gupta. Altekar draws the attention of scholars to the story of Rawwal and Barkamaris (J. B. O. R. S.) as narrated in the Majmal-ut-tawarikh (MT), a work compiled in the 11th. century A. D.. The author of that work, Abul Hasan Ali (1026 A. D.), made merely a literal translation of an Arabic work, which, in its turn, was a translation of a Hindu work. The story has such great resemblance to the plot of Devicandragupta that it may be judiciously used to fill in the details, on which the extracts of the Sanskrit play do not shed any light. Rawwal and Barkamaris are obviously the Arabic forms of Rāma Gupta and Vikramāditya respectively. According to this Arabic historian, Rawwal and Barkamaris were brothers and the queen demanded by the foe had originally chosen Barkamaris as her future husband. But



Rawwal, enchanted by her beauty, forcibly married her. A former rebel of his father's time attacked Rawwal and put him to flight. Rawwal went with his wife, brother, and other noblemen to the top of a mountain, where a strong fortress had been built. But the enemy got possession of the mountain by some strategy, besieged the fort, and was near upon taking it. Rawwal sued for peace and the enemy asked him to send his queen for himself. Just at this juncture, Rawwal's brother, Barkamaris, came in and proposed to go to the enemy's camp disguised like the queen. Through this stratagem Barkamaris was enabled to completely rout the enemy. After this event, however, the two brothers openly became rivals. Barkamaris had, therefore, in self-defence, to pretend that he was mad and moved about like a beggar. On one of his rounds he went to the palace, found the king, Rawwal, inattentive and killed him then and there. This fact of Barkamaris having murdered his brother is corroborated by a passage in the fifth and the last act of Devicandragupta, quoted in the Nātyadarpaṇa, where it has been mentioned that Candragupta apprehended danger from his brother and therefore feigning love-madness entered the palace. The general tone of the few extracts of Devicandragupta, which have been so far discovered, is that the play ended with Rāma Gupta's murder and the marriage of Devī and Candragupta. Candragupta II seems to have taken advantage of the opportunity, afforded by the disgraceful compliance of his brother with the demand of the Śakapati, to enlist soldiers under his own standard in order to free the unfortunate Dhruvadevī and kill her degraded husband. The Gupta inscriptions make it clear that Candragupta II married his brother's widow, Dhruvadevī, and the son born to them, Kumāra Gupta,

succeeded him on the Gupta throne. That Candra Gupta II had married his brother's widow was a well-known fact even in the 9th. century A. D. In the Sanjan plates of Amoghavarṣa I (E. I. XVIII) dated 871 A. D., it is stated : 'That donor, in the Kaliyuga, who was of the Gupta lineage, having killed (his) brother, we are told, seized (his) kingdom and wife'. Bhandarkar argues that the Sanjan plates are here referring to Skanda Gupta Vikramāditya. There was undoubtedly a possibility of fratricidal war at the time of the accession of Skanda Gupta, but had Skanda Gupta married his brother's wife ? Besides, Skanda Gupta's straightened circumstances could hardly have allowed him to be lavish in gifts to such an extent that that characteristic of his should have deserved special mention in later inscriptions. Hiuen Tsang refers to a great Gupta sovereign, Vikramāditya, who was widely known for his charities. Dhruvadevi's seals at Vaisālī describe her as the crowned queen of Candra Gupta II. How could Candra Gupta II, it is asked, legally marry his brother's widow ? A critical examination of several works on Hindu Law makes it clear that such a marriage was held to be quite desirable, at least in the age of Candra Gupta II. \* There is one more point in the Majmal-ut-tawarikh, which is corroborated by inscriptional evidence. The name of the prime-minister of Rawwal and Barkamaris is given there as Safar. The liṅgam from Karamādāṇḍe (Fyzabad, now placed in the Lucknow museum), dated G. E. 117 (i.e. 436 A. D.), has on it the inscription that Prthviṣeṇa, the senior minister in charge of army under Kumāra Gupta I, was the son of Śikharasvāmin, the

Mantrin and Kumārāmātya of Candra Gupta II. Safar is very likely the Arabic rendering of S'ikhara<sup>1</sup>.

The conclusion already arrived at by the study of Devicandragupta, Majmal-ut-tawarikh and the Sanjan copperplates get further epigraphic corroboration from the Sangali and Cambay plates of Govinda IV Rāṣṭrakūṭa (Mirashi : I. H. Q.). The composer of a stanza in these records says that Govinda IV resembled Sāhasāṅka only from the point of view of liberality and munificence, but not from that of his evil doings. The title Vikramāṅka appears on the coins of Candra Gupta II; so Sāhasāṅka may have been his other title. Rājasekhara's mention of Sāhasāṅka, who was a great patron of learning, and the historical tradition of Candra Gupta II's well and widely known charities, further support the assumption that Sāhasāṅka and Candra Gupta II are to be identified. Mirashi brings forth other points of similarity between Govinda IV and Candra Gupta II, thus confirming the proposed identification. The first two lines of the stanza in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa record mention the facts of the murder of his elder brother by Sāhasāṅka and his marriage with his brother's widow. The third line referring to Sāhasāṅka's propitiation of evil spirits also receives remarkable confirmation from a passage in Devicandragupta, where Candra Gupta is shown to have made up his mind to win over a Vampire at night as a last resort<sup>2</sup>.

1 It is interesting, in this connection, to note that the coins of Candra Gupta II, and the contemporary sculptures e.g. those of Candra Gupta's caves at Udayagiri suggest that long locks of hair were worn by aristocracy at that time. This may have facilitated Candra Gupta II's disguise.

2 It may be recalled that the folklore presented through वेतालपंचविंशति introduces विक्रमादित्य and the वेताल closely associated with each other.

Even inspite of all this literary and epigraphic evidence showing that Rāma Gupta, the eldest son and successor, of Samudra Gupta, was killed by his brother, Candra Gupta II, who followed him on the Gupta throne, a question may reasonably be asked: Why is there no reference to Rāma Gupta in any of the Gupta inscriptions themselves? It was, therefore, suggested that Rāma Gupta of Devicandragupta was only a provincial governor, which fact may explain the absence of any inscriptions or coins which could be ascribed to Rāma Gupta. But Sanjana plates definitely contradict this suggestion. Why did Rāma Gupta, it may be further argued against that suggestion, not seek the help of his sovereign when he was in difficulty? The Sanjana plates clearly mention that Candra Gupta acquired the 'kingdom', through the murder of his brother. This cannot be possible if Rāma Gupta had been merely a provincial governor. The paucity of Gupta inscriptions belonging to Rāma Gupta is hardly a strong objection against the assumption of Rāma Gupta's having succeeded Samudra Gupta. Epigraphical lists are usually genealogical and not dynastic, and they often omit collateral rulers. Further it is not unlikely that the later Gupta sovereigns refused to give that imbecile, Rāma Gupta, a place in the gl'orious galaxy of their ancestors. The absence of any coins of this king can be explained on the assumption that the war with the Saka king was fought immediately after the death of Samudra Gupta and the accession of Rāma Gupta, and that the latter's reign was consequently very short.

Who was the Saka king who made himself bold enough to demand of the successor of the great Samudra Gupta his queen? And where did the young prince, Candra Gupta, encounter and kill the Sakapati? Inspite

of Samudra Gupta's numerous conquests; the glory of the Gupta empire began to decline perhaps towards the end of his reign. His forward policy must have created a number of enemies, who must have been waiting only for a suitable opportunity to reassert themselves. Altekar believes (J. B. O. R. S.) that the Śaka Mahākṣatrapa Rudrasena II, whose coins range from 348 A. D. to 378 A. D., and who restored the title 'Mahākṣatrapa', which was for a long time in abeyance, was one of such rulers to reassert himself. The expansion of his possessions could be possible only eastwards and at the cost of the Guptas. It is very likely, therefore, that he was the Śakapati of Devicandragupta.<sup>1</sup> But how can we reconcile this supposition with the evidence put forth by Majmal-ut-tawarikh and Rājasekhara (900 A. D.)? The latter quotes a verse, apparently addressed to Kārtikeya i.e. Kumāra Gupta I, (or, according to Mirashi, to Mahīpāla I of the Gurjara Pratihāra dynasty of Kanauj) wherein we are told that 'the praises (of Candia Gupta) are sung by women of Kārtikeyanagara, just in that Himālaya, from where Śarma (Rāma?) Gupta was forced to retreat, after giving over his queen to the king of the Khasas (Śakas?).' Majmal-ut-tawarikh also points out that a mountain was resorted to by Rawwal when he was attacked by a rebel of his father's times. Rāsal, who seems to have attacked Rawwal (Jayaswal, J.B.O.R.S.) in the Himālayas, was the grandson of Kafand (Kadphises) and son of Ayand (Wema). He may thus have been identical with Daivaputra Śāhānuśāhi, the scion of Kaṇiṣka, who is known, from the Allahabad

1 Bhandarkar and R. D. Banerjee definitely urge that the शकपति of देवीचन्द्रगुप्त could not have been a member of the क्षत्रपि family of Gujarat. Banerjee does not admit even that he was a scion of कनिष्क's family.

pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta, to have been still ruling in northwestern India. It is more probable that it was he, who, emboldened by the weakness of Samudra Gupta's successor, had made his last bid for the recovery of the lost imperial status of his own house. Candra Gupta II is described, in his inscriptions at Udayagiri and Sāñci, as a hero of many battles, and may be regarded to have quelled this offensive launched by Devaputra at the foot of the Himālayas. Śaṅkarārya's interpretation of Śakapati<sup>1</sup> as शकनामाचार्यः suggests that the political leader of the Śakas was also their religious leader. Can the name 'Devaputra' also have that significance? <sup>2</sup> An extract shows that the enemy's camp was stationed at Alipura, which, according to Rangaswami Saraswati,

1 Sarma (I. C. January 1939) puts forth a view—apparently farfetched—that शंकरार्य based his commentary on इर्धचरित on older glosses, when he explains शकपति as शकनामाचार्यः. The old gloss perhaps interpreted शकपति as शकस्वामिन् (which refers to an established tradition), and शंकरार्य, who could not understand the true significance of the term स्वामिन् paraphrased it as आचार्य. स्वामिन् in शक means मुखड and शकपति therefore means शकमुखड. शक chieftain. कनिष्क and others were called मुखडs and therefore the शकपति of देवीचन्द्रगुप्त must have been a कुषाण. Sarma further assumes that the stanza in the Meharauli iron pillar inscription of चन्द्र, viz, तीत्वो सप्तमुखानि येन समरे सिन्धुजिताः बाहिकाः, refers to this defeat of the कुषाणs by Candra Gupta II.

2 A question might be asked, in this connection, whether the same person could be the secular head (पति) as well as the religious leader (आचार्य) of a clan. A few references in रामायण and महाभारत, brought forth by V. Raghavan (I. C. April 1939), show that the heads of mlecchas, political and religious, were called स्लेच्छाचार्यs. स्लेच्छाचार्याश्च ये चान्ये वनशैलान्तवासिनः (रामायण : अयोध्या III 23, 24). स्लेच्छाचार्याश्च राजानः प्राच्योदीच्यास्तथैव च (म. भा. राजधर्म section). The शकs were presumably included by शंकरार्य among mlecchas.

was wrongly read as Aripura. The *Harsacarita* of Bāṇa also mentions Aripura as the place of Śakapati. There is a hill fortress at Alipura in the Kangra district. The Kārtikeyanagara mentioned in Kāvyaīmāṃsā of Rājas'ekhara was situated in the valley of Gomati, near the present village of Baijanatha, which is included in Almora district of the United Provinces. It thus appears that the fight between Rāma Gupta and Śakapati took place not far from this place. Bhandarkar is inclined to believe that Rāma Gupta and Candra Gupta II were, at the time of this event, in the country of Karttupura, which is mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription. Jayaswal, on the other hand, thinks that the place of the encounter between Śakapati and Rāma Gupta was the Jallundhar Doab, somewhere in or about the Sabathu Hill of the Himālayas. The old village of Aliwal in Jallundhar district may be still retaining the ancient name of Aripura. The latter view would seem preferable in view of the fact that the Śakapati of Devicandragupta is taken to be identical with the Kuṣāṇa king.

After the short reign of this ignominious Gupta king, Rāma Gupta, Candra Gupta II, with whom, presumably, the glorious Indian tradition of Vikramāditya started, became, in circa 378 A.D., the overlord of the Gupta Empire. We are fortunate in that we possess several sources, literary and epigraphic, providing ample information with regard to the career of this worthy son of a worthy father. By the nobility of his character evinced by his gallant rescue of Dhruvadevī and by the remarkable diplomacy and valour, which he exhibited in the successful attack against the Śakapati, Candra Gupta II must have already endeared himself considerably to the people of Magadha. His marriage to Dhruvadevī seems to have been the auspicious beginning of a very glorious career.

In the Gupta inscriptions, Candragupta II has been described as the son of Samudragupta and Dattadevi. He seems to have been one among many sons. In spite of the intervening short reign of Rāmagupta, it is stated in the inscriptions that he ascended the throne 'by the choice of the father'. It appears as if Samudragupta, who desired Candragupta II to succeed him, and who must have made his desire known to his courtiers privately, died before the formal nomination of Candragupta to be his successor. So after Samudragupta's death, in the absence of any formal ceremony for Candragupta's Yauvarājya, the Gupta throne passed on, as a matter of course, to the eldest son of the deceased emperor. When, however, Candragupta II came to the Gupta throne after Rāmagupta, he thought it necessary to make his father's choice known to the people through his records. He seems to have looked upon the empire as a sacred and glorious heritage confidently handed down to him by his respected father. Candragupta II, it must be said, amply justified his father's choice.

He started by consolidating his empire on firmer basis. Samudragupta had left behind him an empire, which, though considerably extensive, was not necessarily a unified empire under a single ruler. It was something like a federation of autonomous states grouped together in subordinate alliance to the Gupta suzerain, not certainly without the realisation of the common interests that such a unity subserved. States of nearer Hind formed the integral part of the empire; the frontier states in the east and the north were practically independent, but at the same time on terms of active diplomatic relationship amounting to subordinate alliance. The same seems to have been the case also in respect of north-west frontiers. After the death of Samudragupta, who



was certainly the unifying factor of all these different political units, there naturally followed some sort of disintegration of the empire. One such attempt, during the reign of Rāma Gupta, on the part of the Kuṣāṇa king, was successfully flouted by Candra Gupta II. The reference in the Meharauli iron pillar inscription of Candra Gupta II to a successful war against the Bāhlikas 'by getting across the seven mouths of the Sindhu' can be easily explained by such a supposition. Candra Gupta II, thereafter, made his position on the north-west frontiers and in the Punjab stronger than ever, which fact has been definitely pointed out by his inscription at Mathura. He is the first sovereign of the Gupta dynasty, whose record has been discovered in that city. It is a greatly damaged and undated inscription, but the fragment of it, which is available, refers to the glories of his father, Samudra Gupta, and to his own devotion to the Bhāgavata religion. Candra Gupta II's coins, particularly his silver coins, are plentiful all over the eastern Punjab as far as the banks of the Chenab. Another inscription at Mathura, which was not known to Fleet, was discovered in a garden near the Hardinge bridge of Mathura city, by Pandit Radhakrishna and his nephew, Bholanath. This record is inscribed on a stone pillar, small in size, and square in section at the bottom but octagonal in the middle. It consists of seventeen lines. It is damaged in different parts, the most regrettable damage however being to the part, which mentioned the date in regnal year, since this is the only inscription of the early Gupta emperors, which was dated both in Gupta era and regnal year. The inscription is Śaiva and on one side of the pillar is to be found a naked figure of a Śivagaṇa. The inscription opens with the name of Mahārājādhirāja Bhaṭṭāraka Candra Gupta, the worthy son of Bhaṭṭāraka

Mahārājādhirāja Samudra Gupta. The object of this inscription is to record the building of a temple of Śiva, named Kapileśvara. The last portion of this inscription contains a request to the emperor to protect the grant made for the worship of the deity and for charity at the temple. The great importance of the record lies in the fact that it supplies us with a very early date in the reign of Candra Gupta II, viz. G. E. 61 (mentioned both in numerals as well as in words), that is, 380 A.D.. It appears, therefore, that the consolidation of the north-western dominions of his empire was completed by Candra Gupta II within two years immediately after his accession to the Gupta throne. All this evidence, epigraphic and numismatic, indicates that Candra Gupta II first strengthened his north-western dominions from the Jallundhar Doab to Mathura.

He thereafter turned his attention to the southern end of the north-western frontier, where the Kṣatrapa revival had become sufficiently aggressive. According to Rapson's investigations based on the study of the Kṣatrapa coins, the period extending from 305 A. D. to 348 A. D. is marked by great changes in the political history of the Kṣatrapas, the one clear indication of which was that the office of Mahākṣatrapa fell in abeyance during that period. In the first part of that period, there were two Kṣatrapas, and in the latter part, Kṣatrapa coinage ceases to be issued altogether. All this suggests that their territory was subject to foreign invasion, firstly under Pravarasena I Vākātaka, during the first half of that period, and later, during the second half, under Samudra Gupta, whose victorious advance must have greatly reduced its extent. It seems that the constant wars between the Kṣatrapas and the Vākātakas were partly responsible for the decadence of Kṣatrapa power.

The expansion of Vākātaka authority under Prthviṣeṇa I, whose reign was a long one, according to Ajanta inscription, brought about another period of break in Kṣatrapa rule, between the years, 351 to 364 A. D.. The so-called Uparkot hoard provides striking evidence in this connection. Many of the ninety odd coins of the Kṣatrapas belonging to the reign of Rudrasena are, according to Scott, 'in mint condition and therefore unworn'. From these facts we may fairly conclude that the hoard was secreted at the end of the first period of Rudrasena's reign and most probably it was because of the revolution that then took place, rendering life and property insecure, that the money was hidden'. Another peculiarity of this period, noted by Rapson, is the introduction of certain lead coins with the humped bull on the reverse and the *Caitya*, sword, and the crescent on the obverse. Since these coins belong to the period of the absence of silver coins, it is probable that they were introduced by a new dynasty. This may be explained in view of the extension of the power of Vākātaka Prthviṣeṇa I, in certain parts of whose territory lead coins were in currency under the Āndhras. After the death of the great Vākātaka king, Prthviṣeṇa I, circa 375 A. D., the Kṣatrapas seem to have recovered some parts of their lost territory and a considerable amount of their political influence, so much so that Rudrasena III restored the original family title, Mahākṣatrapa, assumed the offensive, and made a bold bid for regaining that region round about Ujjain, which had constituted the core of their territory, in the best days of Kṣatrapa domination. The successor of Rudrasena III was his sister's son, Mahākṣatrapa Svāmī Siṃhasena. The only date known of this monarch is 382 or 384 A. D.. The martial activities on the part of Mahākṣatrapas Rudrasena III and Siṃhasena

attracted the attention of Candragupta II, who had just then completed his consolidatory operations on the north-western frontiers and in the Punjab. The earliest known date of the silver coinage of the Guptas, in the region which had formerly been in exclusive possession of the Kshatrapas, comes almost about twenty years after 388 A. D., and on this numismatic evidence it is generally assumed that the Gupta conquest of the west must have been effected sometime about 409 A. D.. But there is an inscription of Candragupta II at the Udayagiri cave, which is dated in 82 i. e. 401 A. D.. Udayagiri is a well-known hill, with a small village of the same name on the eastern side of it. It is about two miles to the north-west of Bhilsa. There is a cave-temple, called the Candragupta cave, on the level grounds to the south of the village. The inscription is on the upper part of a smooth panel, over two figures, one of Caturbhuja Viṣṇu attended by his two wives, and the other of Dvādaśabhujā Devī. It is dated, partly in numerical symbols and partly in words, in year 82 i. e. 401-402 A. D.. The object of the inscription is to record the gift, by a Mahārāja of the Sanakānika tribe, who seems to have been a feudatory of Candragupta II, of the two groups of sculptures above which the record is engraved. This Sanakānika seems to have belonged to the tribe of the same name referred to in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta. The Udayagiri cave inscription brings the date of Candragupta II's conquest and occupation of Malwa much earlier than that given by numismatic evidence. There is another undated inscription at Udayagiri cave, ascribed by Fleet to Candragupta II's time, which is a record of the excavation of the cave, as a temple of Śiva, by order of a certain Virasena, also called Saba, a king's minister of peace and war, having

got the position by hereditary rights'. The minister is described as Sandhivigrāhika, a man of learning, and a native of Pāṭaliputra. The inscriptions at Udayagiri indicate the extent of Candragupta II's authority, bringing it quite close to Ujjain, the capital of Malwa and the headquarters of the Kṣatrapas. The last line of the second inscription of Udayagiri indicates clearly that the king in person and the minister were both, at that place, on an expedition of the 'conquest of the world'. In the times of Samudragupta, a large portion of Malwa was included in the Gupta empire and a number of tribes in that region were made to submit to the Gupta sovereign. Mahākṣatrapas Rudrasena III and Simhasena, however, represent the temporary revival of the Śakas in that territory. The process of the conquest of this region must have been gradual. Candragupta II seems to have started operations for rounding off his empire in that particular corner. His expedition involved more than one campaign and a gradual reduction of territory for final incorporation in the empire. Hence the inference that the war in Western Malwa was a protracted affair, and not a quick and sudden conflict, as the numismatic evidence would lead one to believe. The interval of a little over twenty years, noticed by Rapson, between the last Kṣatrapa coins in 388 A. D. and the first Gupta coins in 409 A. D., need not be a bar to the above assumption. A sovereign would issue his own coinage only after there is a settled government in a conquered territory. An inscription of Candragupta II is discovered at Gadhwā in Allahabad district and adds nothing to our knowledge except a date in the reign of Candragupta II, namely, 407-408 A. D. There is, in that inscription, a mention made of Pāṭaliputra. But there is nothing to indicate that it is mentioned as the capital of Candragupta II.

Gupta II. The stone inscription of Candragupta II at Sāñci in the north-eastern Malwa, dated 412-13 A. D., confirms his established domination in that part of the country. It is a Buddhist inscription to record a grant, by one Amrakāradeva, an officer of the Gupta emperor, of a village called Is'varavāsaka, and a sum of money to the Āryasaṅgha, at the great Vihāra of Kākanādabōṭa, for the purpose of feeding mendicants and maintaining lamps. Besides giving a date and confirming Candragupta II's occupation of Malwa, the inscription supplies us with the important detail that the more familiar name of Candragupta II was Devarāja. The year 98 of the Sāñci inscription is the last known date of Candragupta II.

The inscriptions show that Candragupta II conquered the whole of Malwa and his silver coins indicate that he put an end to the domination of the later western Kṣatrapas of Kathiawar. These wars on the south-west frontiers seem to form the only major military enterprise undertaken by Candragupta II after his accession. All other frontiers were presumably free from any political disturbances. According to Fa Hien, Pāṭaliputra was the original capital of the Guptas, but it appears that, later, Candragupta II made Ujjain his second capital, probably in view of the special exigencies of administration that arose particularly on account of the wars against the Śakas and the consequent reorganisation of the newly acquired territory in that region. This fact explains the genesis of the glorious Indian tradition of Vikramāditya of Ujjain. The conquest of western Malwa and Kathiawar made the Gupta empire, under Candragupta II, very vast, extending from Kathiawar peninsula to the confines of Eastern Bengal as suggested by a reference, in the Meharauli iron

pillar inscription, to a successful war on the Bengal frontiers), and from the Himālayas to Narmadā. It is known to have included Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces, Eastern Punjab, portions of the Central Provinces, and practically the whole of Central India including the famous and fertile province of Malwa, North Gujerat and Kathiawar, which included the famous ports of Cambay, Ghogha, Verawal, Porbandar, and Dvaraka. All this wide extent of his dominions justifies Candragupta II's boast of ऐकधिराज्यम्, sole sovereignty of the earth, made in the Meharauli iron pillar inscription. This extension of the western frontiers of Candragupta's empire had considerably influenced trade and commerce as well as culture of Northern India. European and African trade with India received great impetus as a result of the Gupta conquest of Kathiawar ports. The western traders poured Roman gold into the country in return for Indian products and the effect of this great wealth on the country is still noticeable in the great variety and number of coins issued by Candragupta II.

Candragupta II's western conquests must have been facilitated by the subordinate alliance of the Vākātakas with him. Prthviṣeṇa I Vākātaka, however, even after the death of his father, Rudrasena I, which is referred to in the Allahabad pillar inscription, seems to have considerably grown in power and to have extended his domination in Central India and the Deccan. It was then feared that the Vākātakas would be a rival power against the Guptas. Candragupta II, who was perhaps a peaceful statesman rather than a warlike monarch adhered, in this case, to a policy of peaceful diplomatic relations with the Vākātakas. Rudrasena II, the son and successor of Prthviṣeṇa I, is described, in the Vākātaka records, to have married Prabhāvatiguptā, the

daughter of Deva Gupta and Kuberañgā. Who is this Deva Gupta? All the Vākāṭakas after Pravarasena I call themselves simply Mahārājas. This Deva Gupta is, however, described as Mahārājādhirāja. In the Rddhapura grants of Queen Prabhāvatiguptā, her father's name is given as Candra Gupta II with his usual titles, which fact convincingly proves the identity of Candra Gupta II and Deva Gupta. The name Devarāja in the Sāñci inscription of Candra Gupta II was definitely taken by Fleet to refer to a person different from Candra Gupta II. A critical examination of the Sāñci record goes against the theory proposed by Fleet, that Devarāja is the name of the minister. That a subordinate governor should make a donation like this in honour of a minister seems to be an unusual procedure particularly when the sovereign also is himself brought into close connection with the donor. The reading, प्रियनाम (धियालङ्कृतस्य) तस्य, suggested, in that context, by Aiyangar, is certainly better than that proposed by Fleet, प्रियनाम (अमालो भवत्ये) तस्य. The former reading indicates that Candra Gupta II, bore the affectionate name, Devarāja. Prinsep also translated this passage, where the name, Devarāja, occurs, so as to suggest that Devarāja was another name of Candra Gupta II. By means of the alliance with the Vākāṭakas, Candra Gupta II, protected his left flank, and it is very likely that the marriage between Rudrasena II, and Prabhāvatiguptā took place during Candra Gupta II's campaign in Malwa. It has already been stated that Prthvi-ṣeṇa's was a long reign. This fact, coupled with the references to the regency of Prabhāvatiguptā for her son makes it possible to assume that Rudrasena II's was a short reign. Whatever may have been the diplomatic relations between Candra Gupta II, and Prthviṣeṇa I, there can be no doubt that Candra Gupta II's influence



was predominant during the reign of Rudrasena II, the regency of Prabhāvatiguptā for her son, and a considerable part of the reign of Pravarasena II. There is certain literary evidence to support this assumption. *Setubandha*, a *prākṛta* *kāvya*, is ascribed to Kuntales'a Pravarasena. The *Vākāṭakas* were presumably styled Kuntales'a, ever after the annexation of Kuntala by *Prthviṣeṇa* I *Vākāṭaka*. Kuntales'a Pravarasena must, therefore, necessarily have been Pravarasena II, the grandson of *Prthviṣeṇa* I. The commentator of that *prākṛta* *kāvya* further points out that the work was composed by one Pravarasena, who was in the court of Candra Gupta II, and that it underwent critical revision at the hands of *Kālidāsa*, at the instance of *Vikramāditya* himself. This tradition makes it sufficiently clear that *Vikramāditya*, *Kālidāsa* and Pravarasena II *Vākāṭaka* were contemporaries.<sup>1</sup> In the *Sṛṅgāraprakāśa* of Bhoja,

1 On the assumption that कालिदास has tried to glorify, in the *रघुवंश*, the exploits of the family of his patrons, the Guptas, under the pretext of describing the exploits of the race of the Raghus, an interesting piece of evidence has been brought forth to prove that कालिदास was a contemporary of Candra Gupta II. In canto I of that *महाकाव्य*, the race of the Raghus is characterised by कालिदास, in one of the many stanzas, as follows: असमुद्रक्षितीशानामानाकरध्वर्त्तनान् [(of the kings) who were the rulers of the earth bounded by seas, and whose chariots had overrun the regions reaching the sky.] Now applying this description to the Guptas, the word असमुद्रक्षितीश has to be interpreted: (the race) of the Gupta sovereigns upto Samudra Gupta, that is to say, where Samudra Gupta is the last sovereign to be mentioned. This indicates that कालिदास knew Samudra Gupta as the last Gupta sovereign, who had been dead. He was a contemporary of Candra Gupta II, who

a verse is ascribed to Kālidāsa, through which he is said to have reported to the Gupta emperor, his impressions regarding the luxurious life in the court of the lord of Kuntala, who was obviously a protege of the Gupta sovereign. Heras believes that the Kuntalesa, referred to in that verse, was the Kadamba king, Kākutsthavarman. But by a critical study of the Talgunda pillar inscription of Kākutsthavarman and of several grants of the Western Gaṅgas, N. Lakshmi Narayanarao shows (I. H. Q.) that the date of Kākutsthavarman must be 435 to 475 A. D., and that Kuntalesas, in the time of Candragupta II, were most certainly the Vākātakas. So this Kuntalesvara, to whom Kālidāsa was presumably sent as embassy by his patron, Candragupta II, was evidently Pravarasena II Vākāṭaka. This fact also corroborates our earlier conclusion. It appears as if the administration of the large kingdom of the Vākātakas was neglected by Pravarasena II, but the Vākāṭaka territory still remained intact on account of the dominating influence of Candragupta II. Matrimonial alliance seems to be a distinctive feature of the Gupta foreign policy. Candragupta

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succeeded Samudragupta, and therefore claims to have sung the glories of the line of the Gupta sovereigns ending with Samudragupta. The word, आनाकरथवर्त्मनाम्, may be read as आनाकरथवर्त्मनाम्, in order to make it applicable to the Guptas. It is a well-known fact that the Gupta sovereigns in general, and Samudragupta in particular, had successfully advanced into the regions, which had once belonged to the family of the nagas. It is further suggested, in this connection, that कालिदास wrote the drama, मालविकाग्निमित्रम्, in order to commemorate a historically important event, in the regime of Candragupta II, namely, the marriage of the Vidarbha princess ( ? प्रभावलिपुता ) to a prince of Malwa ( ? रुद्रसेन II वाकटक )

Gupta I, married a Licchavi princess. Candragupta II, married Kubernāgā, who, as her name indicates, must have been a Nāga princess. The Gupta princess, Prabhāvatiguptā, was married to Rudrasena II Vākātaka. And the daughter of the Kadamba king, Kākutstharvarman, was married to Kumāragupta (or to his son).

Candragupta II was the first Gupta sovereign to assume the title of Vikramāditya. He is also styled Simhavikrama, Simhacandra, Sāhasānka, and Vikramānka. His empire, vast as it was, must have been administered efficiently, so that even the most remote provinces could substantially feel the influence of the imperial headquarters. We get an insight in Candragupta II's provincial administration from the Basarh excavations and the Damodarpur copperplates. At the former place a number of clay seals were unearthed. From one of these it appears that Dhruvadevi held charge of the administration of a province even under the emperor. Among the clay seals which were discovered by Fleet in the excavations at Basarh there is to be found one bearing the following inscription: Mahādevī Śrī Dhruvasvāminī, wife of Mahārājādhirāja Śrī Candragupta, and mother of Mahārāja Śrī Govindagupta. There were a number of other seals belonging to officers of various denominations as also to private individuals. Among them, again, is one of Śrī Ghaṭotkaca Gupta. The variety and character of the seals in this find seem to justify Bhandarkar's suggestion that they were the casts preserved in the workshop of the potter, who was the general manufacturer of seals for that locality. There were several administrative divisions and subdivisions of the empire and these were under the command and control of a regular hierarchy of officials. References are also made to the staff and the subordinate officers. The reference to the Paṇḍit

of Udānakūpa indicates that Paṛiṣad still formed an important element of the Hindu government machinery. There were, besides these, several guilds and commercial corporations. The benevolent efficiency of Candragupta II's administrative organisation finds support in the fact recorded in the Mandasor inscription of 437 and 473 A. D., that a guild of silkweavers belonging originally to a particular province found it necessary to migrate, owing to disorder prevailing in their native land, and settled down within the Gupta empire, with a view to ply their trade of silk-weaving over there and attain prosperity thereby. That a guild of weavers should, in the course of a generation prosper so well that a considerable section of them could devote themselves to the leisurely pursuit of the study of astronomy, testifies to the fact that the imperial administration offered advantages necessary for the prosperity of the trade, internally and perhaps even overseas, in such article of luxury as silk-fabrics. The great literary works of Kālidāsa and Viśākha-datta, produced under the regime of Candragupta II, are an imperishable evidence of the Gupta sovereign's patronage of learning and cultural sciences.

✓ We can get sufficiently reliable information about the conditions prevailing in North India at the beginning of the 5th century A. D. from the accounts of Fa Hien's travels. He speaks of the people, who were numerous and quite happy. There was no register of households and no necessity was felt of magistrates and regulations. Capital punishment was abolished by Candragupta II. He is also said to have installed a series of hospitals. His officers were obviously well paid and were consequently very efficient. To the common people, Candragupta II is said to have often given away donations of

dināras and suvarṇas. His munificence, as observed elsewhere, was of world-wide fame. The catholic spirit of Candragupta II, in religious matters is evidenced by the fact that the Udayagiri cave inscription and Mathura stone inscription are Śaiva, the Sāñci inscription is Buddhist, and the other Udayagiri cave inscription is Vaiṣṇava. So, too, among his ministers were persons belonging to different religious sects; Amrakāradeva was a Bauddha, while Virasena Śaba and Śikharasvāmin were Śaivas. It has been suggested (I. H. Q. 1927) that Candragupta II too, like his father, Samudragupta, performed a horse-sacrifice, and that a stone horse lying in a village, named Nagawa near Benares, which bears an inscription containing the letters *candragu*..... commemorates that event. Fa Hien who visited India between 405 and 411 A. D., while telling us that the empire was prosperous and well-governed, would lead us to think that Buddhism held a predominant position. The evidence of the coins indicates, on the other hand, that the rulers were Hindus and that Buddhism must have, by this period, long passed its zenith.

More gold and silver coins of Candragupta II have been discovered than those of his father, Samudragupta, or of his son, Kumāragupta I. The most important innovations introduced by Candragupta II were in the coinage of the country. His coins are characterised by considerable originality. The throned goddess is now replaced by purely Indian type of goddess seated on a lotus. His other types are the couch type, the umbrella type, the śiṃha-parākrama type and original horseman type. Candragupta II is also responsible for the introduction of a currency of silver and copper coins, the former being considerably extended by Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta. Fa Hien's statement that cowries

were the only articles used in buying and selling, though of great numismatic interest, has to be taken to be referring to petty transactions. The inscriptions mention the *suvarṇas* and *dināras*, which were generously distributed by the Gupta sovereign among his people.

Candra Gupta II had, besides *Prabhāvatiguptā*, two or three children from his chief Queen, *Dhruvadevī*. *Kumāra Gupta*, his eldest son, succeeded him on the throne, while *Govinda Gupta*, and perhaps also *Ghaṭotkaca Gupta* were appointed viceroys to rule over certain provinces in his vast empire. Certain mediaeval chieftains of Kanarese districts claimed descent from Candra Gupta II. The origin of this tradition is to be traced back to some 'unrecorded adventures of *Vikramāditya* in the Deccan'. Candra Gupta II had become the master practically of the whole of Northern India, after having exterminated the Scythians of the Punjab, the north-west frontiers and Western India. Through the matrimonial alliance with the *Vākātakas*, he had neutralised the only rival power in India. He wielded, in fact, complete domination even over the *Vākātaka* territory, as shown above. He was unquestionably the paramount sovereign of India in his times. The latest date of Candra Gupta II, which is given in the *Sāñci* pillar inscription, viz., 412-13 A. D., and the earliest date of his successor, *Kumāra Gupta I*, mentioned in the *Bilsad* stone pillar inscription, viz., 415-16 A. D., would indicate that Candra Gupta II died and was succeeded by his eldest son, *Kumāra Gupta I*, sometime between 413 and 415 A. D..

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## CHAPTER V

### THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE KUMĀRA GUPTA I: SKANDA GUPTA.

Kumāra Gupta started his imperial career peacefully, but it ended in disaster. He had been bequeathed, by his noble and great father, the glorious heritage of the vast and well-administered Gupta Empire, and consequently the earlier part of Kumāra Gupta I's long rule was by far the most prosperous period in the whole history of the Gupta dynasty. He is described, by the *Mañju-srī-mūlakaṭpa*, as by no means 'a weak king', but an 'excellent' and 'leading' sovereign. Kumāra Gupta I's extensive coinage and the wide distribution of his inscriptions and of the find-spots of his silver coins clearly indicate that he was able to retain intact his father's empire including the western provinces, under him. The Gadhwa stone inscription of Kumāra Gupta I, is engraved immediately below the inscription of Candragupta II, separated by a line across the stone. The inscription is badly damaged and no date, except the day, is available. Neither the religion, nor the object of this inscription can be determined, the only fact to be gleaned therefrom being that a gift of ten *dināras* and an uncertain amount was given for a *Satra*. The other Gadhwa inscription of Kumāra Gupta I, which also is badly broken gives the date 417-18 A. D. The earliest inscription of Kumāra Gupta I, seems to be that on the Bilsad monolithic

columns of red sand-stone dated 415-16 A. D.. Bilsad is a village consisting of three parts in Eta district of the United Provinces. The two inscribed pillars at Bilsad seem to have had a direct connection with a temple, now ruined. The object of the inscription is to record the accomplishment of a temple of Kārtikeya its pratoli, and the establishment of a *Satra*. It also gives the genealogy of the Gupta sovereign. These three inscriptions roundabout the home-province of the Guptas show that Kumāra Gupta I, was not disturbed, in the earlier part of his career, by any foreigner, and that therefore he could devote his time and money for acts of charity and sacredness and for the internal prosperity of his dominions. There are some other inscriptions of Kumāra Gupta I, which are not noticed by Fleet. An image of a Jaina Tirthaṅkara was dedicated at Mathura by Kumāra Gupta I, in 432 A. D.. In the same year, a grant or transfer of land was recorded on a copperplate in Bengal. This plate has been recovered in a fragmentary condition and nothing can be known from it beyond the name of the reigning sovereign, the date, and the name of the Vaisya, which is read as Khasāpara by Bannerjee and as Khādāpāra by Basak. The copperplates, recently discovered at Damodarpur in Dinajpur district of Bengal are, from the historical point of view, far more illuminating. Two of these plates, dated 124 G. E. and 128 G. E. (443 A. D. and 447 A. D.), belong to the reign of Kumāra Gupta I. The first of these records points out that in 443 A. D., when the Paramadaivata Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja Kumāra Gupta was the ruling sovereign, an Uparika, named Girāṭadatta, was the governor of Pundravardhana Bhukti in Bengal. Under him there was Kumārāmātya Vetravarman, who served as the



deputy governor of the district of Koṭivarṣa. The copperplate records that a Brahmin, named Karpaṭika, applied to the local officials for the sale of a piece of waste land to him. The application was sanctioned and the sale confirmed by the inscription on the copperplate. The process mentioned herein is of considerable importance from the point of view of the revenue-administration and the economic life of the Gupta period. The second Damodarpur copperplate also mentions Cīrātadatta and Vetravarman and is of great interest for the economic history of the period. The Tumain inscription of 435 A. D. mentions Prince Ghaṭotkaca as governing the province of Eran, which included Jambuvana. The importance of the Mandasor inscription of Kumāra Gupta I, and Bandhuvarman, who governed Daśapura, has already been referred to. It is dated in Mālava Era 493 (437 A. D.) and also in 473 A. D., and indicates how prosperous, trade and commerce were, in those days. The Gangādhara stone inscription dated M. E. 480 (424 A. D.) of Viśvavarman, the father of Bandhuvarman, and the son of Naravarman, is also to be referred to the times of Kumāra Gupta I. It is suggested by Bhide (J. B. O. R. S. VII) that this Viśvavarman was an independent king, who, flourished a century before his namesake, who later was a feudatory of the Guptas. But Majumdar definitely points out that this Viśvavarman must be later than Naravarman. The Karamdande inscription of Kumāra Gupta I's time, which, too, has already been referred to, mentions Prthviṣeṇa, the son of Śikharasvāmin, who was a Mantrin, a Kumārāmātya and afterwards Mahābalādhikṛt of Kumāra Gupta I, stationed in Oudh. All these inscriptions belonging to the reign of Kumāra Gupta I, are historically useful from three points of

view. Firstly they prove that Kumāra Gupta I had preserved intact the vast empire of his father extending from Malwa to Bengal and was steadily contributing to its general prosperity in a variety of ways. Secondly many of these inscriptions give us clear glimpses in the economic life and the revenue-administration of these days. Thirdly they provide ample information regarding the administrative divisions of the Gupta empire and the system of their government. There is yet another inscription of Kumāra Gupta on the Mankuwar stone image, dated in G. E. 129 (448 A. D.). Mankuwar is a small village on the right bank of the Jumna, about nine miles from Arail in Allahabad district. On the front of the pedestal of a seated image of Buddha, the first line of the inscription is inscribed at the top, immediately below the image, and the second line is inscribed at the bottom of the pedestal. Between these two lines there is a compartment of sculptures containing in the centre the Bauddha wheel, on each side of the wheel, a man seated in meditation facing full front, and at the corner a lion. The inscription is Budhhist and records the installation of the image on the pedestal on which it is engraved. It is interesting, from the palaeographical point of view, to note that OM is represented, throughout the Gupta period, by a symbol as in this inscription. The inscription refers to a Kumāra Gupta giving him the subordinate title of Mahārāja. Who was this Mahārāja Kumāra Gupta? We know of no feudatory monarch of the name of Kumāra Gupta, belonging to this period. The date of the inscription, moreover, fits exactly into the period of Kumāra Gupta I. Why, then, is he here styled simply as Mahārāja? The use of the subordinate title in this case may perhaps have been due to carelessness or ignorance on the part

of the person, who drafted the inscription. Or otherwise it may indicate an actual historical fact, namely, that Kumāra Gupta was reduced, towards the end of his career, to feudal rank, by Puṣyamitras (?) and Hūṇas, whose invasions of the Gupta dominions are so pointedly alluded to in the Bhitari inscription of Skanda Gupta. It should be remembered, in this connection, that the Mankuwar stone image inscription gives the latest available date during the reign of Kumāra Gupta I. In support of the assumption of Kumāra Gupta's being reduced to feudatory rank, Fleet brings forth the evidence of the rather doubtful legend on one of Skanda Gupta's coins : महाराज कुमारपुत्र परममहादित्य महाराज स्कंद. But that assumption is obviously without proof. Kumāra Gupta I, is not otherwise known to have ever been reduced to the position of a feudatory, though the absence of any inscriptions of Kumāra Gupta I, after this one, dated in 448 A. D., may suggest troublous times towards the end of his career. We possess no records belonging to the last seven years of this sovereign's reign. We know from the silver coins that Kumāra Gupta ruled till 136 G. E. - 455-56 A. D. The Mañju-srī-mūlakalpa points out that Mahendra's kingdom was invaded by the Yavanas, Pahlīkas and Śakunas, who first fought amongst themselves. They took possession of Gāndhāra and of countries north of the Ganges. Kumāra Gupta I., had taken up the title of Mahendrāditya and the fact seems to have been that during the latter part of his reign, the north-western frontiers of the Gupta empire were invaded by horde after horde of barbarians, consisting of Hūṇas, Sassanians, and Kuṣāṇas. Kumāra Gupta I., sent his army under Skanda Gupta to check the progress of the invaders. The Gupta empire had thus ' been made to tatter ', during the con-

cluding years of Kumāra Gupta's reign. There is a reference, in the Bhitari inscription of Skanda Gupta, to the Puṣyamitras having been conquered by the valiant prince, Skanda Gupta. It seems as if the Puṣyamitras also were responsible for the disaster which the Gupta empire suffered in the old age of Kumāra Gupta I. These Puṣyamitras have been mentioned in Viṣṇu Purāṇa, and Jaina Kalpa Sūtra. The emperor, Kumāra Gupta I, thus, seems to have been engaged in the encounters with the barbarians, during the concluding years of his reign. The earliest invasion was successfully repulsed by the Crown Prince, Skanda Gupta, but later on the strain of continued warfare was acutely felt by the treasury and the emperor was compelled to issue coins of impure gold. No inscription of Kumāra Gupta I, however, gives us the chronology or other information regarding the wars with the barbarians. In the meanwhile Kumāra Gupta I., died in 455-56 A. D. and the credit of restoring the deteriorating fortunes of the dynasty goes exclusively to Skanda Gupta.

Kumāra Gupta I., seems to have scrupulously followed the Gupta tradition of tolerance in religious matters. This fact is evidenced by the different religious sects, which have been referred to in his inscriptions. The Bilsad inscription speaks of the worship of Kātrikeya Mahāseṇa Swāmī, while Buddha, Śiva and the Sun-god are glorified in the Mankuwar, Karamdande and Mandasor inscriptions respectively. There is also a mention of Viṣṇu-worship in some of his records. His long rule was, on the whole, more or less uneventful and therefore sufficiently peaceful and prosperous, except for the foreign invasions during the last years. The emperor was styled differently in his records and coins as

Srī Mahendra, Asvamedhamahendra, Ajitamahendra, Sirhamahendra, Srī Mahendrasirīha, Mahendrakumāra, Sirhnavikrama, Vyāghrabalaparākrama, and Srī Pratāpa. The numismatic evidence points clearly to the celebration of Asvamedha by Kumāra Gupta I. There is to be found the rare asvamedha type of his gold coins. His coins are numerous and of varied types. The six varieties of the horseman type are by far the commonest among them. The original types introduced by Kumāra Gupta I., include the swordsman type, the elephant-rider type, the pratāpa type and the peacock type. Some of these are reminiscent of his early hunting exploits. The silver coinage of the Western Kṣatrapa type introduced by his father, Candragupta II., was extended by him, but he was compelled, in times of stress, during the first Hūṇa war, to mint this type on silver-plated copper instead of pure silver. The reign of Kumāra Gupta I is remarkable also for the issue of a separate silver coinage for circulation in Central India.

Kumāra Gupta's name, Kumāra, is identical with that of the Commander-in-chief of Gods, Kārtikeya. According to some scholars the birth of Kumāra Gupta was commemorated through the composition of Kumārasambhava by Kālidāsa, who was the court-poet of Candragupta II. Though Kumāra Gupta I., often compared himself with the 'General of the Gods', it seems that he was not much of a heroic warrior like Samudra Gupta, nor an intrepid leader of men like Candragupta II. The credit of having preserved the vast Gupta empire intact for a long time, if not of enlarging it, is certainly due to him. But the foreign invaders, who must have been marking time, seem to have recognised the incapacity of Kumāra Gupta for any offensive or even for defensive, and to have consequently, started inroads in the

Gupta territory during the concluding years of the Gupta sovereign's reign. Kumāra Gupta I., was, however, remarkably fortunate in having for his son a very valiant prince, Skanda Gupta, who deservedly assumed, later on, the proud title of Vikramāditya. Skanda Gupta succeeded in repulsing the first onslaught of the foreign intruders.

In the inscriptions of Kumāra Gupta II, the name of the queen of Kumāra Gupta I., is given as Anantadevī. The Talgunda pillar inscription of Kākutsthavarman refers to the matrimonial alliance, which that Kadamba monarch contracted with the Guptas and other royal families like the Gaṅgas and the Vākātakas. A critical examination of several genuine Western Gaṅga grants indicates that the date of Kṛṣṇavarman, the second son of Kākutsthavarman, whose sister was married to the Gaṅga King, Mādhava III, was definitely 475-500 A.D.. The date of his father, Kākutsthavarman, must, therefore, have been circa 435 to 475 A. D.. The regime of Kumāra Gupta I., ranged from 414 A.D. to 455 A.D.. It is most likely, therefore, that the Kadamba princess, Anantadevī, was married to the Gupta sovereign, Kumāra Gupta I. From this marriage was presumably born Pura Gupta. Skanda Gupta seems to have been the son of Kumāra Gupta I, by another wife, whose name apparently is deliberately omitted in all official genealogies of the Gupta dynasty. Huiien Tsang mentions that Fotō - kio - to, that is to say, Budha Gupta, was a son of Śakrāditya, which was another name of Kumāra Gupta I Mahendrāditya. Śrī Ghaṭotkaca Gupta of the Tumain inscription and of the Basarh seals was either a brother or a son of Kumāra Gupta I. The latest available silver coin of Kumāra Gupta gives the date, 455-56 A.D., in which year, apparently, he died after a long rule.

Upto 1889 our knowledge of the Gupta dynasty was limited to the sovereigns mentioned in the Bhitari pillar inscription of Skanda Gupta. In that inscription we are told that Skanda Gupta was the son and the immediate successor of Kumāra Gupta I. The discovery in 1889 of the Bhitari silver copper seal of Kumāra Gupta II added to our knowledge two more generations of the Guptas and three new names. Pura Gupta is mentioned therein to have succeeded Kumāra Gupta I. The name of Skanda Gupta does not occur in that seal at all. The question of succession on the Gupta throne after Kumāra Gupta I., has consequently given rise to great controversies among scholars.

It has been found difficult to reconcile the conflicting evidence of the Bhitari pillar inscription and the Bihar inscription of Skanda Gupta on the one hand and of the Bhitari seal of Kumāra Gupta II., on the other. The first mentioned records consistently represent Skanda Gupta as the occupant of the Imperial Gupta throne immediately after Kumāra Gupta I. The Bhitari seal, however, makes no reference to Skanda Gupta, but mentions Mahārājādhirāja Śrī Pura Gupta as the son and successor of Kumāra Gupta I. It has been suggested that the evidence of the seal clearly points to Pura Gupta's being the rightful heir and immediate successor of Kumāra Gupta I, and that Skanda Gupta apparently obtained, or rather usurped, the Gupta throne only after a bitter struggle, in the course of which Pura Gupta and possibly some other claimants to the throne also perished. According to D. C. Ganguly (I. H. Q.), a close examination of the Junagadh rock inscription, which records that Skanda Gupta, after the death of his father, bowed down his enemies, that his fame reached the country of the Mlecchas, and that the goddess of fortune selected

him as her husband, having discarded all other sons of the deceased sovereign, makes it sufficiently clear that Skanda Gupta secured the Gupta throne through his own prowess and did not get it merely by way of natural inheritance. The trouble of the Mlecchas could not have come in his way to peaceful succession if he really had been the lawful heir to the throne. The fact in the matter seems to have been, according to Ganguly, as follows: In the latter part of the reign of Kumāra Gupta I, the western frontiers of the Gupta empire were invaded by the barbarians and other tribes. Kumāra Gupta I, sent his army with Skanda Gupta to check the inroads of the invaders. In the meantime, while Skanda Gupta was still away fighting the enemy, Kumāra Gupta I, died, leaving the throne to Pura Gupta, who was apparently his eldest son by his chief queen. After repulsing the attack of the enemy, Skanda Gupta returned to the capital, and, having overthrown his brother, Pura Gupta, with the aid of the army under his command captured the throne. If, on the other hand, argues Ganguly, we accept the theory put forth by Pannalal that Pura Gupta succeeded Skanda Gupta on the throne, we have to face the contingency of explaining the regime, within the short space of seven years from 468 to 475 A. D., of all the three kings mentioned in the Bhitari seal, namely, Pura Gupta, Narasimha Gupta, and Kumāra Gupta II. Mujumdar also is of the opinion that there was a fratricidal struggle after Kumāra Gupta I's death, in which Skanda Gupta was ultimately successful. He brings forth the evidence of a verse in the Bhitari pillar inscription of Skanda Gupta wherein he is compared to Kṛṣṇa. The omission of the name of Skanda Gupta's mother, in the inscription, indicates, according to Mujumdar, that she was not the



Mahādevī and that Skanda Gupta could not consequently have been the rightful heir to the throne. Just as Kṛṣṇa rescued his mother, Devakī, so, we are told, in the Bhitari pillar inscription, Skanda Gupta rescued his mother after having put down all his brothers including Pura Gupta.

Several objections may be urged against these suppositions. The names of the mothers of the Gupta sovereigns, even when they happen to be Mahādevīs, are not necessarily mentioned in the Gupta inscriptions. In some cases, on the other hand, the name of a queen, even when she was not a Mahādevī, is mentioned, as in the case of Kuberaṇāgā. Further the eldest son was not, as we have already seen, necessarily chosen as the successor. The references to enemies, in the Bhitari pillar inscription, are again definitely not to the internal enemies, but to the Puṣyamitras, Hūṇas and Mlecchas. Finally the mention in the Bhitari seal of Pura Gupta, immediately after Kumāra Gupta I with the prefix तत्पादाबुध्यात्, does not necessarily prove that Pura Gupta was the immediate successor of his father. A more convincing argument in favour of Skanda Gupta's priority to Pura Gupta on the Gupta throne is that the find-spots of the coins of the three Gupta sovereigns mentioned in the Bhitari seal, namely Pura Gupta, Narasimha Gupta, and Kumāra Gupta II, indicate very definitely that these monarchs had very little authority outside Bengal, Bihar, and the eastern districts of the United Provinces, namely, Mirzapur and Basti. Skanda Gupta, on the other hand, is known to have been the overlord of a much larger and more extensive empire. That Skanda Gupta immediately succeeded Kumāra Gupta I, on the Gupta throne, is corroborated by a reference to that effect in the Mañju-srī-mūlakaṃpa. Final-

ly we know that the latest known date of Kumāra Gupta I is G. E. 136, which is found on his coins; and Skanda Gupta must have ascended the throne in the same year, because the inscription of a governor under him, on the Junagadh rock, is also dated in 136 G. E. i.e. 455 A. D.. How, then, could there be any interval between Kumāra Gupta I's death and Skanda Gupta's accession to the throne, for Pura Gupta to intervene?

Mujumdar (I. A.) is inclined to believe that Skanda Gupta and Pura Gupta are the names of one and the same Gupta sovereign. There is no possibility of a partition of the Gupta empire into two branches, one independent branch being ruled over by Pura Gupta and Narasimha Gupta. All the coins attributed to Pura Gupta are, according to Mujumdar, exactly similar to the coins of Skanda Gupta. But as a matter of fact, the evidence of coins brought forth by Mujumdar itself goes directly against the proposed identity of Pura Gupta and Skanda Gupta. When a dynasty is on its decline, the general tendency of the coin type formulae and legends is to become fixed and stereotyped. Further there is not a single instance, in the coinage of the Imperial Gupta dynasty, where two different personal names of the same sovereign are used on his coins. Under these circumstances it is unconvincing to assume that Skanda Gupta and Pura Gupta were the names of one and the same sovereign.

After the death of Kumāra Gupta I, in 455 A. D., Skanda Gupta ascended the Gupta throne, in the same year. He bore both the names of his illustrious grandfather, Devarāja and Vikramāditya, and assumed a variety of titles. He is said to have been twelve years of age when he was sent by his father Kumāra Gupta I, against the advancing hordes of the barbarians and when he

successfully repulsed the coming onslaught. This tradition, however, cannot be reasonably granted. Both the father and the grandfather of Skanda Gupta ruled for a fairly long time. Candragupta II is known to have ruled from 379 to 415 A. D., and Kumāra Gupta I from 415 to 455 A. D.. Consequently Skanda Gupta must have been approaching middle age when he came to the throne. During seven years after Skanda Gupta's death, two more generations of his brother, Pura Gupta, are mentioned, in the Bhitari seal, to have ruled. This would be possible only on the assumption that Skanda Gupta died a fairly old man, at the end of his comparatively short regime of only twelve years. We possess a number of epigraphic records of Skanda Gupta's reign, from which it is possible to reconstruct the chronology very accurately. The earliest record in the chronological order is the famous Junagadh rock inscription of his viceroy in Surāṣṭra, Parnadatta, and the latter's son, Cakrapālita. The same rock also bears the fourteen rock edicts of Aśoka Maurya, as well as an inscription of Rudradāman I Mahākṣatrapa, dated 150 A. D.. The rock lies at a distance of one mile to the east of Junagadh at the entrance of the valley girdling the mighty and sacred Girnār mountain. On the hundred square feet of uneven surface of a large rounded and somewhat conical granite boulder are seen the three inscriptions belonging to three distinct periods of history and referring to three distinct dynasties of ancient India. The name of the town was Girinagara and the mountain was called Ūrjayat. The inscription mainly gives the history of the Sudarsana lake. The Vaisya viceroy, Puṣyagupta, under the Maurya emperor, Candragupta, had in 310 B. C. got the great lake constructed at the foot of the mountain Ūrjayat, and the Yavana king, Tuṣāspa, who

was a viceroy under the Maurya emperor, As'oka, had excavated, in 260 B. C., canals for irrigation purposes from this great lake. During the reign of Mahākṣātrapa Rudradāman, in 150 A. D., the lake was destroyed by storm, and, the water having escaped, the lake सुदर्शन, we are told in the inscription, was rendered दुर्दर्शन. The dams were rebuilt by Suvisākha, the Pahlava minister of Rudradāman I. This great lake, once more, burst its bunds on a night in August of 455-56 A. D., and was repaired by the orders of the Gupta emperor, Skanda Gupta. Parnadatta was then the viceroy of Surāṣṭra and the repairs were supervised by his son, Cakrapālita. The new dam was of masonry and Cakrapālita got a temple of Viṣṇu built on it, in 457-58 A. D.. No trace can now be found of the great embankments or of the temple of Viṣṇu built by Cakrapālita. Apart from giving the history of the Sudarsana lake, and, incidentally, also the history of As'oka and Rudradāman, the inscription is a convincing evidence of the fact that inspite of the temporary inroads of foreign invaders, which were, undoubtedly, successfully repulsed by Skanda Gupta during the last years of his father's regime, Skanda Gupta remained the sole master of the vast Gupta empire including Western Malwa and Kathiawar. It is also interesting to note how Kathiawar was considered as one of the most important provinces on account of its ports, which greatly facilitated foreign trade. Skanda Gupta had to deliberate considerably over the appointment of the viceroy of that province and certainly found a worthy official to fill the post in Parnadatta, who is called 'Farna Data' by Persian chroniclers. Moreover the fact that Vaiṣṇavism was the official religion of the Gupta sovereigns is suggested by the construction of a temple of Viṣṇu over

there. The inscription further throws light on the political administration in Skanda Gupta's time. The particular care shown at the time of appointing the viceroy of Surāṣṭra and the statement in the inscription सर्वेषु देशेषु निधाय गोप्तुम् indicate, according to Allan, that the Gupta sovereign was at special pains to appoint a series of responsible 'Wardens of the Marches' to protect his dominions from impending invasions. This scrupulousness on the part of Skanda Gupta also suggests that the Gupta sovereign knew full well that the danger of the Hūṇa onslaught was not yet then over. There is a reference to Nāga in one of the passages, which, according to Fleet, may possibly be a secondary allusion to Skanda Gupta's having overthrown some kings of the Nāga dynasty. But no Nāga kings were then known to have been so powerful as to oppose Skanda Gupta.

There is another record of Skanda Gupta discovered in the home-province itself. On a broken red sandstone column at Bihar in Patna district there is an inscription, the first part of which is undated and mentions Kumāra Gupta. The name of his wife seems to be peeled off. This part, like the second, presumably refers to Skanda Gupta, because it mentions a village named Skandaguptavata. The inscription records the erection of the column, called Yūpa in line 10, apparently by some minister, whose sister was Kumāra Gupta I's wife. It records certain shares in the village of Skandaguptavata and in another agrahāra, the name of which is lost. This part seems to have belonged to the Śaiva form of worship in its śākta or tāntric development. The second part, which is undated, is obviously the record of Skanda Gupta and is grossly mutilated. The record gives the names of several officers; and the fact that a village was named after the sovereign speaks

for itself. Skanda Gupta seems to have greatly endeared himself to the people of Magadha. No internal troubles, at least at this time, are hinted at. The tolerant spirit of Skanda Gupta in religious matters is made known to us by the stone pillar inscription, of 460 A.D., at Kahaum, about five miles to the southwest of Salampur in Gorakhpur district. The modern Kahāwana is the ancient Kakubh or Kakubhagrāma of the inscription. There are sculptures, 'the most important of which are five standing naked figures, one in a niche on the western face of the square base and one in a niche on each side of the square block immediately below the circular stone with an iron spike in it, which, the original pinnacle having been lost, now forms the top of the column.' According to Pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji, these are distinctly Jaina images. They were set up by Madra together with the column itself. There is a reference in this inscription, which is historically very significant. The date has been mentioned, in this inscription, rather peculiarly as गुप्तानां वंशजस्य स्कन्दस्य शान्ते वर्षे. Various interpretations have been suggested of the phrase, शान्ते वर्षे. One view in this connection is that the date refers to the extinct (?) year of the era. Other scholars read the phrase as शान्ते: वर्षे, explaining it as the year of or after the death of Skanda Gupta. Both these views seem to be unconvincing. It is better to understand the clause, with Bhau Daji, as referring to the tranquil reign of Skanda Gupta. The fact seems, in this way, to be ascertained that in 460 A.D. the regime of Skanda Gupta was quite undisturbed. Dated just two years before the death of Skanda Gupta there is a copperplate of the sovereign, which refers to the country between the Ganges and the Jumna, which fact also indicates, beyond doubt, the unbroken and undisturbed rule of

Skanda Gupta in that region. The copperplate discovered at Indor, in Bulandshahr district of the United Provinces, is dated in words, Phālguna 146 G. E. — 465-66 A.D.. Its object is to record a perpetual endowment by a Brahmin, Devaviṣṇu, for the purpose of maintaining a lamp in a temple of the Sun-god, at Indrapura. The ultimate motive of the endowment is said to have been the prosperity of Sarvanāga, the viceroy of Antarvedi. The inscription gives us a few glimpses in the institution of guilds in Skanda Gupta's time. 'This gift of a Brahmin's endowment of the temple of the Sun is the perpetual property of the guild of oilmen, of which Jīvanta is the head, residing at Indrapura, as long as it continues in complete unity, even in moving away from this settlement. But there should be given by the guild, for the same time as the sun and the moon endure, two *palas* of oil by weight, uninterrupted in use, (and) continuing without any diminution from the original value.' (Fleet: Gupta Inscriptions).

Curiously enough in none of the above-mentioned inscriptions is there a clear reference to the warlike activities of Skanda Gupta against the Hūṇas. There is, of course, a reference to the conquest of the Mlecchas in the Junagadh rock inscription. But the exact chronology of those wars is almost unknown. The Bhitari pillar inscription of Skanda Gupta is remarkably valuable and useful from this point of view. Bhitari is about five miles to the northeast of Sayyidpur in Ghazipur district. The red sandstone column, on which the inscription is found, stands outside the village. It is a Vaiṣṇava inscription and its object is to record the installation of an image of Viṣṇu, under the name of Śārṅgin, and the allotment, to the idol, of a village outside which the

column stands. The whole genealogy of Skanda Gupta is given in detail in this inscription and a very important reference is made to the disturbed state of affairs at the end of Kumāra Gupta I.'s regime. Though the inscription is unfortunately undated, it obviously indicates that, by that time, Skanda Gupta had already accomplished the conquest of the Puṣyamitras and the Hūṇas. In spite of Divekar's arguments (A.B.O.R.I.) in favour of the reading युध्यमित्रान् insted of पुष्यमित्रान्, one is inclined to feel that the reference is most distinctly to the Puṣyamitras. Divekar's objection against that reading that the tribe is not mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta is not quite relevant. We do find, on the other hand, reference to the Puṣyamitras in the Purāṇas and it appears as if they were just one of the many tribes from among the Hūṇas, representing presumably the first wave of the Hūṇa advance to reach the plain of the Punjab. Skanda Gupta seems to have saved his father's empire from total destruction at the hands of the Puṣyamitras. We are told in a very picturesque passage in the Bhitari pillar inscription: 'By whom, when he prepared himself to restore the fallen fortunes of his family, a ( whole ) night was spent on a couch that was the bare earth ; and then having conquered the Puṣyamitras, who had developed great power and wealth, he placed his left foot on a footstool, which was the king of that tribe himself.' Of the Hūṇa war further information is given in the same inscription : ' Who, when ( his ) father had attained the skies, conquered ( his ) enemies by the strength of his arm, and established again the ruined fortunes of ( his ) lineage ; and then crying, " the victory has been achieved," betook himself to ( his ) mother, whose eyes were full of tears of joy, just as Kṛṣṇa, when he had



slain (his) enemies, betook himself to (his mother) Devakī.' And further: 'Who with his own armies, established again his lineage that had been made to tatter..... (and) with his two arms subjugated the earth, (and) showed mercy to the conquered people in distress, (but) has become neither proud nor arrogant, though his glory is increasing day by day; (and) whom the bards raised to distinction with (their) songs and praises.' And finally. 'By whose two arms the earth was shaken, when he, the creator (of a disturbance like that) of a terrible whirlpool, joined in close conflict with the Hūnas.' A critical examination of these statements occurring in the Bhitari pillar inscription may offer a connected history of the wars which Skanda Gupta fought against the foreign invaders. It seems that the first battle against the Puṣyamitras was fought by Skanda Gupta when he was the 'Crown Prince,' and at a time when the fortunes of the Gupta dynasty had begun to dwindle. The Mañju-srī-mūlakalpa confirms this supposition by stating that Skanda Gupta was very young when he repulsed the onslaught of the Puṣyamitras, which represented the earlier inroads of the barbarians in the Gupta territory. Though, as shown elsewhere, Skanda Gupta could not have been very young when he vanquished the Puṣyamitras, the statement of the Mañju-srī-mūlakalpa may be taken to refer to the Yauva-rājya of Skanda Gupta. It is this event of the conquest of the Puṣyamitras, which is referred to in the earliest record of Skanda Gupta, namely, the Junagadh rock inscription. In the second and presumably the fiercer battle which must have been obviously fought by Skanda Gupta immediately after the death of his father, Skanda Gupta is said, in the Mañju-srī mūlakalpa, to have led the flower of orthodox Hindu India, excluding the

Buddhists, - the sons of ministers and noblemen, - and conquered an army which was numerically stronger.

This exploit, too, seems to have been achieved by Skanda Gupta during the earlier years of his regime, when, even after the first convincing defeat inflicted on them by the young prince, the Hūṇas and other barbarians were still pouring into the plains of India. After these victories, which were accomplished at an early date in his imperial career, Skanda Gupta presumably enjoyed a comparatively peaceful and prosperous time, as is evidenced by his other inscriptions, particularly by the Kahaum inscription, which refers to the Śānta Varṣa of Skanda Gupta's regime. Skanda Gupta, however, took particular pains to appoint capable viceroys and the 'Wardens of the Marches' in order to protect his dominions from future invasions. His records show beyond doubt that he was master of the whole of Northern India from Kathiawar to Bengal. He was assisted by conspicuously able governors, like Paṇḍadatta and Cakrapālita of Surāṣṭra, Sarvanāga of the Doab, and Bhīma-varman of the Kosam region. Even Bhaṭṭārka, the founder of the so-called Valabhi dynasty, was, as may be inferred from Valabhi records, originally a military commandant, senāpati, sent by Skanda Gupta to reinforce the defence of Kathiawar. The history of that dynasty, which will be considered later, supplements, to a considerable extent, the history of the Gupta empire. No details are given, in any of Skanda Gupta's inscriptions, regarding the actual warfare against the Hūṇas. The Hūṇas are mentioned in history, for the first time, in connection with their great military adventure, as the result of which they are said to have driven away, in 165 B.C., the Yueh-chi tribe from the Kansu province in North-western China. Subsequently they spread over

Southern Asia and Europe, and while Attila was becoming a terror to the Roman emperors, by the end of the 5th century A.D., other leaders of the Hūṇas were busy devastating the fairest provinces of Persia and India. Skanda Gupta valiantly defended India, for a time, by defeating the Hūṇas and other barbarians, this remarkably glorious event being later commemorated by the erection, at Bhitari, of a 'pillar of victory'. Though Skanda Gupta had arranged efficiently for the defence of his territories, through scrupulous selection of his viceroys, governors and commandants of army, as the Junagadh inscription clearly indicates, neither he, nor his father before him, had taken care to guard the north-western gates of India. They were neglected by Kumāra Gupta I, and Chinese historians have recorded the destruction of the cities of Bactria and Afganistan by foreign invaders. And Skanda Gupta too cannot be said to have put an end to the further devastation of the country, by the Hūṇas, once and for all; he merely postponed that tragedy.

Skanda Gupta apparently had some military engagements with the Vākāṭakas also. The death of Pravarsena II, who was virtually a protege of Candragupta II, marked the beginning of a change in the political relationship between the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas. The earlier Gupta-Vākāṭaka hostilities were skilfully concluded as the result of the diplomacy of Candragupta II, who gave his daughter in marriage to the Vākāṭaka king. This matrimonial alliance indeed made the Gupta sovereign the virtual ruler of the Vākāṭaka territories, during the reign of Rudrasena II, the regency of Prabhāvatiguptā, and the reign of Pravarsena II. The succession list, as given in the Ajanta inscription of Varāhaśekhara, does not let us into the secret

of the further relations of the Guptas with the Vākātakas. The Ajanta inscription does not clearly mention the name of the successor of Pravarasena II, though Devasena and Hariṣeṇa are said to have succeeded the unknown successor of Pravarasena II, on the Vākātakā throne. There is, however, a copperplate grant of the Vākātakas, which mentions Narendrasena as the immediate successor of Pravarasena II. The record further points out that Pr̥thviṣeṇa II succeeded Narendrasena. This anomaly regarding the Vākātakā succession, after Pravarasena II, corresponds, curiously enough, with the contemporary anomaly regarding the Gupta succession, whereby both Skanda Gupta and Pura Gupta are mentioned, in two different inscriptions, as the immediate successors of Kumāra Gupta I. That apparent anomaly in the succession lists of the Guptas has already been explained away. The Vākātakā genealogy also may be satisfactorily reconstructed by means of the coordination of the two above-mentioned Vākātakā records. It may be reasonably assumed that Narendrasena, who was the eldest son and successor of the Vākātakā king, Pravarasena II, ruled from about 435 A. D. to 470 A.D. He was thus a contemporary of Kumāra Gupta I as also of Skanda Gupta. Narendrasena was succeeded by his son, Pr̥thviṣeṇa II, who, in his record, is said to have regained the fortunes of his family. After his death, without leaving behind an issue, in circa 485 A. D., he was succeeded by his uncle's son, Devasena, the latter in his turn being followed by Hariṣeṇa. The records of Devasena and his son, Hariṣeṇa, prove that Pr̥thviṣeṇa II was actually able to rehabilitate the Vākātakā authority to a very considerable extent. After having fixed the genealogy and a tentative chronology of the Vākātakas, let us examine their relation with the

Guptas. In the Balaghat copperplates of Prthviṣeṇa II, the sovereignty of Narendrasena is said to have been acknowledged by the lords of Kosala, Mekala, and Malwa, that is to say, of the region, over which Candragupta II had extended his suzerainty, at a comparatively early date in his regime, and had maintained it intact by means of the matrimonial alliance with the Vākātakas and the extermination of the Western Kṣatrapas of Gujerat and Kathiawar. Narendrasena claimed to be a sovereign power in the Vindhyan region, extending from the coast of the Bay of Bengal in south-east, north-eastwards as far as the Aravalli hills. The region thus included the Berar-Maratha country, Konkan, Kuntala, Western Malwa, Gujerat, Kosal, Mekala, and Āndhra. Narendrasena thus claimed to have virtually succeeded to the Gupta overlordship in the west and in the south upto Kuntala of the Kadamba kingdom. We have, on the other hand, already seen that during the major part of his regime, Skandagupta, after having defeated in two successive wars, the Hūṇas, the Puṣyamitras and other barbarians, ruled peacefully over large territory extending from Malwa to Bengal. When could Narendrasena have, under these circumstances, achieved the sovereign eminence of which he boasted? A significant clue, in this connection, is also supplied by a reference in the same record, where Prthviṣeṇa II is glorified for 'having raised his sunken family.' The facts of the whole affair seem to be these: While Skandagupta was busy fighting hordes after hordes of foreign invaders, Narendrasena presumably started military operations in order to regain the territories, which his family had once possessed. But instead of being successful in his enterprise, he seems to have received a signal set-back on account of Skandagupta's victories over the Hūṇas

and other invaders. Hostilities between the Guptas and the Vākātakas began since then. And it may be assumed that Skanda Gupta was kept busy, during the last years of his regime, quelling the rebellious attitude of the Vākātakas, and reducing considerably their growing territories and increasing domination. The reference in the Balaghat plates to 'the sunken family' may be understood in this way. In the meantime, Skanda Gupta died, and Narendrasena Vākātaka, who survived him took advantage of this Gupta tragedy and continued with greater vigour the programme of extending Vākātaka territory, which had received temporary set-back at the hands of Skanda Gupta, and with the help of his valiant son, Prthviṣeṇa II, established his sovereignty in Kosala, Mekala, and Malawa, thus qualifying himself for the title, कोसलमेकलामालवाधिपत्यभ्यर्चितशासन. The unfortunate death of Skanda Gupta must have afforded ample scope for these militarist adventures of Narendrasena and his son, Prthviṣeṇa II. These provinces, which were then snatched away, by the Vākātakas, from among the Gupta possessions, were not recovered, for a long time, by any of the Gupta sovereigns. The Vākātakas, in addition to the Hūṇas and other foreign tribes, had thus made their own contribution towards bringing about the disintegration of the Gupta empire.

Two new epigraphic records, so far unknown, further throw some light on the rapid decadence of Gupta sovereignty, after Skanda Gupta's death. With the discovery of the Tumain inscription, in the ancient province of Malwa, a further problem apparently arose regarding the successor of Kumāra Gupta I, on the Gupta throne. That epigraphic record, which is dated in G.E. 116, i.e. 435 A.D., belongs to the regime

of Kumāra Gupta I. It mentions the names of Candra Gupta II, Kumāra Gupta I, and then of Ghaṭotkaca Gupta, the portion of the inscription giving the relationship between the latter two being damaged. It is likely that Ghaṭotkaca Gupta was a son or a younger brother of Kumāra Gupta I and was appointed the governor of Malwa at that time. He is certainly to be identified with the person of the same name, who is mentioned on the Basarh seals. The manner in which the name of Ghaṭotkaca Gupta is mentioned after that of Kumāra Gupta I, in the Tumain inscription, cannot be supposed to indicate that Ghaṭotkaca Gupta succeeded Kumāra Gupta I, on the Gupta imperial throne, since the latter was still living in the year, in which the inscription is dated; but it certainly indicates that Ghaṭotkaca Gupta was then trying to be politically independent, by severing all loyal connections, which he owed, in his capacity of a provincial governor, to his sovereign in Magadha. The internal dissensions among the scions of the Gupta royal family thus appear to have started even during the times of Kumāra Gupta I. M.B. Garde of the Archaeological Survey of Gwalior State brings forth another more important epigraphic record in this connection, namely, the Mandasor inscription of V.S. 524 or 467-68 A.D.. It records the erection of a stūpa and an āśrama and the excavation of a kūpa by one Dattabhāṭa, the commander-in-chief of a king named Prabhākara, who is styled, in the inscription, 'the destroyer of the enemies of the Gupta dynasty.' This king Prabhākara is not known to us from any other source. The inscription also mentions Govinda Gupta, who was presumably the viceroy of Malwa at that time. It is historically significant that the name of Prabhākara's Gupta suzerain in Magadha has not been mentioned in this record. It is very likely

that, immediately after the death of Skanda Gupta in 467 A.D., Govinda Gupta refused to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Gupta emperor of Magadha. The latter is therefore not mentioned in this inscription of Govinda Gupta and Prabhākara. This date very nearly coincides with the outbreak of hostilities between the Guptas and the Vākātakas. It was then that the Vākātaka king, Narendrasena, found it most opportune to conquer Malwa. These incidents, indicated by the Mandasor inscription of 467-68 A.D., also provide us with an important historical clue regarding the third force, which obviously hastened the disintegration of the Gupta empire, namely, the internal dissensions among the Guptas, which had already started, during the regime of Kumāra Gupta I, and which assumed serious form after the death of Skanda Gupta. Govinda Gupta was presumably a scion of the imperial Gupta dynasty, like Ghaṭotkaca Gupta, though the relationship between the two is not clear. He too seems to have severed all loyal connections with the Gupta imperial sovereign immediately after the death of Skanda Gupta. As we have seen elsewhere, Narendrasena Vākātaka and his son, Prṭhvi-ṣeṇa II, took advantage of these internal dissensions among the Guptas. The find-spots of the coins of the three successors of Skanda Gupta indicate very definitely that their political authority was considerably limited, and thus justify, to a certain extent, the boast of the Vākātaka king, Narendrasena.

Like all his predecessors, Skanda Gupta showed remarkable tolerance and catholicity in religious matters. Being a Vaiṣṇava himself, he still encouraged Jaina and solar worship. His name itself is an indication of his inclination towards Skanda, the son of Lord Śiva. Skanda Gupta had taken up the titles of Kramāditya and



Vikramāditya. His extensive coinage indicates definitely that he had maintained supremacy in the western dominions. Gold coins, belonging to the earlier part of his regime, are few in number, which fact may be explained on the assumption that Skanda Gupta was then busy restoring the 'fallen fortunes of his family.' With the reign of Kumāra Gupta I, Gupta coinage had reached the high water-mark in point of excellence and variety. The reign of Kumāra Gupta I being also the best period of plastic activity, the coins of that sovereign are individual objects of art. The Gupta empire had, however, begun to decline since the last years of Kumāra Gupta I; and with the decline of the Gupta empire began also the decline of the Gupta coinage. The later issues of Skanda Gupta's coins, though on heavier standard, show a definite deterioration from the point of view of the purity of gold.

Highest praise is due to Skanda Gupta, who was undoubtedly the first hero in Asia and Europe to vanquish the Hūnas. श्रेष्ठ, बुद्धिमान्, धर्मवत्सल—these are the epithets which are employed in the Mañju-srī-mūlakalpa with reference to this illustrious sovereign. His wise administration, his heroic wars, his patriotic ambitions—all these made Skanda Gupta one of the greatest of the Gupta emperors. Unfortunately he was the last in that glorious galaxy of sovereigns. The last known date of Skanda Gupta is 148 G.E., that is, 467-68 A.D., which is found on some silver coins. He seems to have died in that year—a hero in harness. Vincent Smith's view that Skanda Gupta's empire succumbed to the repeated Hūna attacks and finally perished after his death is not only without any evidence, but is distinctly contradicted by other sources. Skanda Gupta did a great service to India by delaying the devastation of the country, by the

Hūnas, at least by fifty years or more. No epigraphic records refer to the queen or the children of Skanda Gupta. He appears to have left behind him no male issue. His brother, Pura Gupta, who may have been presumably trying to ascend the throne of Magadha, even during the life-time of Skanda Gupta, when the latter was kept away busy fighting wars against the Hūnas and the Vākātakas, now legitimately succeeded him.

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE LAST VESTIGES OF THE GUPTA GLORY.

The fact that the name of Skanda Gupta is deliberately omitted in the Bhitari seal of Kumāra Gupta II may be explained away on the assumption that hostile relations existed between the two brothers, Skanda Gupta and Pura Gupta. Though there are other instances where collateral rulers are often omitted, since the epigraphical lists are usually genealogical and not dynastic, such as in the case of Rāma Gupta, the case of the Bhitari seal is, according to R. D. Bannerjee, quite different. When we compare the Bhitari seal with the Sonapat seal of Harṣavardhana, we do feel inclined to admit that the name of Skanda Gupta was intentionally omitted from the former. Bannerjee goes on further to the extent of assuming that Pura Gupta actually rebelled in Magadha, while Skanda Gupta was absent from the capital, at the time of wars with enemies, which fact may explain the find of gold coins of Pura Gupta in Gaya district. But there is very little evidence to prove the actual rebellion of Pura Gupta. Though there may have been some ill will between the two brothers, as a consequence of which the name of Skanda Gupta was omitted in the Bhitari seal, it is more likely that Pura Gupta ascended the Gupta throne only after the death of Skanda Gupta. The coins of Pura Gupta, which also are of impure gold, indicate the further straightened

circumstances of the Guptas. The archer type of coins of Pura Gupta and his successor show that they had no hold over the distant provinces of Skanda Gupta's empire, such as, Central India, Gujerat, Malwa and Surāṣṭra. None of these three later successors of Skanda Gupta seems to have issued any silver coins, which were generally used in those provinces. The above assumption is corroborated by the Mandasor inscription of Govinda Gupta, dated 467-68 A.D. and the Balaghat plates of Prthviṣeṇa II Vākāṭaka. On account of this defection of the western provinces the revenues of the state had diminished considerably. No actual dates are available referring either to Pura Gupta or to his son, Narasiṃha Gupta. A period of anarchy and misrule, in the annals of the Guptas, begins with the death of Skanda Gupta. The north-western frontiers of the Gupta empire were already lost to the Hūṇas; and the Vākāṭakas acquired the western, the southern and south-western portions of the empire. The find-spots of the coins of Pura Gupta, Narasiṃha Gupta and Kumāra Gupta II distinctly prove that their sovereignty was restricted to Bengal, Bihar and the eastern districts of the United Provinces. The only epigraphic record which refers to Pura Gupta is the Bhitari seal of his grandson, Kumāra Gupta II. Pura Gupta is said to have been the son of Kumāra Gupta I and Anantadevi. He is mentioned, in that seal, immediately after Kumāra Gupta I, with the prefix तत्प्रादादुच्यते. The date of his grandson, Kumāra Gupta II, which will be shown to be 473 A.D., makes it necessary to assume that Pura Gupta died before that date. The fact that his coins are extremely rare may seem to confirm the view that he ruled for a very short time. We cannot grant Allan's theory that the horseman-type issues of Prakāśaditya are to be

assigned to Pura Gupta, owing to lack of evidence. A further objection has been raised against the so-called gold coin of Pura Gupta. Allan illustrates a gold coin, which he ascribes to Pura Gupta. It is of archer type and closely resembles the heavier issues of Skanda Gupta and has, on the reverse, the legend Śrī Vikrama. On the obverse, beneath the left arm, is inscribed the name of the king. The palaeographical evidence, according to S. K. Saraswati (I.C. April 1935), indicates that the letters on that coin are to be read as *budha* and not as *pura*. If this is a fact—as will be shown later, it is—the number of Pura Gupta's coins dwindles still further. So during 468–473 A.D., a longer period has to be allotted to the reign of Narasiṃha Gupta, since his coins are greater in number than those of his father, Pura Gupta. Pura Gupta issued gold coins of the archer type only. On certain coins, his name is omitted altogether, while on others, it is given in a vertical line beneath the left arm of the king. Allan identifies Pura Gupta with king Vikramāditya of Ayodhya, the father of Bālāditya, who latter became a patron of Buddhism, through the influence of Vasubandhu. This may suggest that the successor of Skanda Gupta had his capital at Ayodhya, presumably till the rise of the Maukharis. We have already seen, from the Gaya grant of Samudra Gupta, that Ayodhya was the seat of Gupta Jayaskandhāvāra, as early as Samudra Gupta's time. The coinage of Skanda Gupta's successors is characterised by the scarcity of gold coins and the lack of variety in types. It must be regarded as certain that, howsoever victorious Skanda Gupta had been, and howsoever glorious his regime, the disintegration of the Gupta empire was definitely being hastened early in the reign of Pura Gupta. The Mañjuśrī-mūlakaṇṭha does not seem to mention Pura Gupta at

all, apparently on account of his very short reign ; or it may be argued that the reference to Pura Gupta, in that work, is lost in the portion of the text after the word अनुज. Moreover it should be remembered that the author of the Mañju-srī-mūlakalpa does not mention that Bālāditya ascended the Gupta throne immediately after Skanda Gupta.

The Bhitari seal gives the name of the queen of Pura Gupta as Srī Vatsadevī. She was the mother of Narasimha Gupta Bālāditya, who, according to the Bhitari seal, succeeded Pura Gupta, presumably in 468-69 A.D.. There is no inscription belonging exclusively to the time of Narasimha Gupta. Whatever we know of him is derived from his coins. A grave misunderstanding has, however, arisen as the result of a false identification of this Bālāditya with the Bālāditya, who, according to Hiuen Tsang, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Hūṇa king, Mihirakula, and took him a prisoner in or about 520 A. D.. Hoernle was the first scholar to have started the tentative theory of the identification of these two Bālādityas in the Gupta history; but later he himself found it necessary to abandon it. It was highly improbable under the circumstances, which followed after the death of Skanda Gupta, for two kings, Pura Gupta and Narasimha Gupta, to rule till 520 A. D., that is to say, for over fifty years after the death of Skanda Gupta. Former feudatories, like Govinda Gupta of the Mandasor inscription, had then assumed political independence, which fact is quite evident from the charters of land, issued by them, which do not even mention the name of the Gupta emperors. Narendrasena and his son, Prthvi-ṣeṇa II, of the Vakāṭaka dynasty, were advancing in their ambitious campaigns to retrieve the family fortunes. Hordes after hordes of Hūṇas had rushed into the plains

of India through the western and north-western gates of the Gupta empire and were rapidly annexing province after province. How under such circumstances, could Narasimha Gupta Bālāditya, coming so closely after Skanda Gupta, be expected to rule continuously and presumably progressively for such a long period. There is no epigraphical evidence to that effect and the evidence of the coins of Pura Gupta and Narasimha Gupta Bālāditya, which are few in number, also goes against such an assumption. Further, the son and successor of the Bālāditya, mentioned by Hiuen Tsang, as the conqueror of the Hūṇas, was called, according to that Chinese pilgrim, Vajra, while the name of the son and successor of Narasimha Gupta Bālāditya is given, in the Bhitari seal, as Kumāra Gupta.

The discovery of the Sarnath inscriptions of Kumāra Gupta and Budha Gupta throw further light on this problem. It is absolutely certain that Kumāra Gupta of the Sarnath inscription is not Kumāra Gupta I, the son and successor of Candra Gupta II. K. B. Pathak has put forth the theory that Kumāra Gupta of the Sarnath pillar inscription, dated 473 A. D., was the son of Skanda Gupta, while Budha Gupta of the Sarnath pillar inscription, dated 476 A. D., was the son of that Kumāra Gupta and the grandson of Skanda Gupta. This theory would clearly go against the chronology of the successors of Skanda Gupta, which has already been settled on the basis of epigraphic evidence. It has been pointed out that Pura Gupta succeeded Skanda Gupta, on the Gupta throne, and was, in his turn, followed by Narasimha Gupta Bālāditya and Kumāra Gupta II, of the Bhitari seal. What could have happened to the Kumāra Gupta of the Sarnath inscription, who is supposed by Pathak to have been the son of Skanda Gupta, and who should

have, in that case, succeeded his father on the Gupta throne, immediately after the latter's death? In this connection, Basak believes that there were two rival Gupta families ruling simultaneously, one line consisting of Skanda Gupta, his son, Kumāra Gupta of the Sarnath inscription, and grandson, Budha Gupta also of the Sarnath inscription, and the second line consisting of Pura Gupta, his son, Narasimha Gupta, and grandson, Kumāra Gupta, all three being mentioned in the Bhitari seal. There is not the slightest evidence for assuming that there was any kind of disruption in the Gupta dynasty, in the latter half of the 5th century A. D.. Further it will not be possible, on such assumption, to say exactly what happened to these two lines of Gupta sovereigns, in later history, or to ascertain how long they continued to exist side by side. This theory has consequently to be given up as unsound, because it is not confirmed by any evidence, and because it does not suit the chronology of the later Imperial Guptas, which is derived from epigraphical and other sources. The date of Kumāra Gupta of the Sarnath inscription is 473 A. D.. It has already been pointed out that Pura Gupta and Narasimha Gupta could not have ruled for a long time after Skanda Gupta's death in 467 A. D.. Moreover Pannalal has conclusively proved that there is no evidence of any kind to indicate the existence of Kumāra Gupta, the son and successor of Narasimha Gupta Bālāditya, at any date posterior to the eighth decade of the 5th century A. D.. The dates of Kumāra Gupta of the Sarnath inscription and of Kumāra Gupta of the Bhitari seal are thus brought quite close to each other; there exists, at the same time, no reliable evidence, which may indicate that two Gupta sovereigns bearing the same name, Kumāra Gupta, had been ruling simultaneously. The only and the most



reasonable conclusion that may be drawn from these facts is therefore that Kumāra Gupta of the Sarnath inscription must be identical with Kumāra Gupta of the Bhitari seal. We have consequently to assume that Pura Gupta and Narasimha Gupta ruled only for about five years in all, which fact can be very well understood in view of the disturbed political conditions that prevailed after the death of Skanda Gupta. Kumāra Gupta II, of the Bhitari seal and the Sarnath inscription, who was the son of Narasimha Gupta, must have in his turn ruled till 476 A. D., which is the date of the Sarnath inscription of Budha Gupta. This Budha Gupta was supposed, by some scholars, to have been the son of Kumāra Gupta II, and the grandson of Narasimha Gupta Bālāditya. This supposition, however, will be later shown to be entirely wrong. The fact that three Gupta sovereigns were crowded during the short period of less than ten years, i.e. from 467 A. D. to 476 A. D., receives confirmation from another epigraphic source. There is an inscription of Bandhuvarman at Mandasor, which is dated in 437-38 A.D. and again in 473 A.D.. A guild of silk-weavers built a temple of the Sun-god at Dasapura in 437 A. D., that is to say, during the reign of Kumāra Gupta I. We have been further told, in the inscription, that 'under several kings,' a part of the temple fell into disrepair and that the temple was again repaired by the same guild in 473 A. D., that is to say, during the reign of Kumāra Gupta II. The phrase, 'under several kings,' is historically significant. It can be reasonably interpreted only in the sense that several Gupta kings, namely, Kumāra Gupta I, Skanda Gupta, Pura Gupta, Narasimha Gupta and Kumāra Gupta II, ruled during the interval between 437 A. D. and 473 A. D.. The Mañju-srī-

mūlakalpa knows of two Bālādityas, the second among them being mentioned as the conqueror of Mihirakula.

The above discussion thus leads us to two historically important conclusions: Firstly, that Narasimha Gupta, the son of Pura Gupta, was not the Bālāditya, who is said to have vanquished the Hūṇa monarch, Mihirakula; and secondly that Kumāra Gupta of the Bhitari seal is the same as Kumāra Gupta of the Sarnath inscription. He may be styled Kumāra Gupta II. His date as given in the Sarnath inscription is 473 A. D., which fits in satisfactorily with the whole reconstructed chronology of the later Imperial Guptas.

Narasimha Gupta, who assumed the title of Bālāditya, was, according to the Bhitari seal, the son and successor of Pura Gupta. Pura Gupta could not have reigned longer than a year or so. Consequently Narasimha Gupta must have ascended the throne in or about 468-69 A. D., and ruled upto circa 472-73 A. D., since, in the latter year, his son, Kumāra Gupta II, has been proved to have been ruling. That Narasimha Gupta ruled for a longer period than his father is also proved by the find of a larger number of coins belonging to his regime than those ascribed to his father. All his coins are of gold and of the Archer type, which is the only type known since the days of Skanda Gupta down to the days of his brother's grandson, Kumāra Gupta II. The Archer type of Narasimha Gupta is divided into two classes, according to fabric. The coins of a ruder fabric fall into the second class and appear to have been issued at a time of great financial and political pressure. There were apparently issued, in Narasimha Gupta's time, no silver coins, which were otherwise generally in circulation in Western India. Narasimha Gupta is known to us only from his coins and from the reference to him in his

son's inscription on the Bhitari seal. No date can thus be available pertaining to this sovereign and the chronology of his regime is, therefore, to be settled on the basis of the date of his son, Kumāra Gupta II, given on the Sarnath inscription. Narasimha Gupta was presumably a young man when he ascended the Gupta throne. His *biruda*, *Bālāditya*, may indicate the same thing. The view of Vincent Smith that the Gupta empire succumbed to the repeated Hūṇa attacks and finally perished after the death of Skanda Gupta is positively contradicted by the *Mañju-srī-mūlakalpa* and the *Candragarbhastūtra*. There is no doubt that Pura Gupta's regime, short as it was, was the period of continued warfare, devastation, and disintegration. But his son, Narasimha Gupta, seems to have retrieved the Gupta fortunes to a considerable extent. The *Mañju-srī-mūlakalpa* states that the regime of *Bālāditya* was निःसर्पत्रं अकष्टकम्—'without foes and without obstacles.' Naturally we have to understand this statement more or less as poetic exaggeration and accept it with reservations from the historical point of view. But the larger number and the heavier types of his coins do support the assumption that Narasimha Gupta tried to recover the lost glory of his family and did achieve a certain measure of success in his enterprise. These coins were to be found in a larger number in Bengal proper than either in Bihar or the United Provinces.

Jayaswal believes that this *Bālāditya* was the first Gupta sovereign to have assumed Buddhism as his religion. This fact is proved, according to him, by an inscription discovered at Nalanda. Allan too refers to this *Bālāditya* as having become a patron of Buddhism through the influence of Vasubandhu. The date of Vasubandhu is however much earlier. Narasimha

Gupta Bālāditya is called a *cakravartin* in the Mañju-srī-mūlakaḥ, which fact suggests that he was a full and real emperor, and that there was no diminution of his ancestral territories. The statement in the Mañju-srī-mūlakaḥ may, as said above, only mean that Narasiṃha Gupta seriously undertook the responsible task of regaining what was lost of the Gupta sovereignty, in the days of his father. This rehabilitation was undoubtedly proceeding successfully, as is evident from the inscription of his son's successor, Budha Gupta, who was, as will be seen later, the lord of a very vast territory. So the credit of being a pioneer in this recuperative work and even of achieving a certain measure of success in the enterprise is certainly due to Narasiṃha Gupta. The paucity of epigraphic records referring to this Gupta sovereign does not permit us to gather any further information regarding his regime. Fleet points out that the principal capital of Bālāditya and his successors was Kasi. The Mañju-srī-mūlakaḥ states that Narasiṃha Gupta Bālāditya died young, at the age of thirty-six, which fact explains his comparatively short reign.

The epigraphic and literary evidence points out that immediately after Narasiṃha Gupta, Kumāra Gupta II ascended the Gupta throne. We fortunately possess three distinct inscriptions referring to the times of this sovereign. Kumāra Gupta II is said to have been the son of Narasiṃha Gupta and Śrī Mahālakṣmīdevī. The Bhitari seal which gives this information is historically very important, since it is the first and the only inscription to bring to the notice of the historians the names of Pura Gupta and Narasiṃha Gupta. The Sarnath image inscription of Kumāra Gupta II gives us his date and considerably helps us to settle the chronology of the later Imperial Guptas. That inscrip-

tion also indicates that Kumāra Gupta II was very much respected round about his capital, Kasi. Does it further indicate that he too, like his father, was a patron of Buddhism? The selection of the Sarnath image for his inscription is very significant from this point of view. Sarnath, as is well-known, is a particularly sacred place of the Buddhists. By far the most important inscription of Kumāra Gupta II's regime is, however, the latter part of the Mandasor inscription of Bandhuvārman, dated 473 A. D.. The description in line 13 of the first part of the inscription makes it perfectly clear that Kumāra Gupta, referred to in that portion, is Kumāra Gupta I. But the date of the latter part of the inscription, namely 473 A. D., undoubtedly proves that the whole inscription was published in the times of Kumāra Gupta II. Pannalal is of the opinion that the whole Mandasor inscription, which mentions Bandhuvārman and Kumāra Gupta, refers exclusively to the regime of Kumāra Gupta II. This supposition is without any foundation and goes against the Gupta chronology reconstructed from other sources. Moreover it would not be reasonable to assume that Bandhuvārman, the son of Viśvavarman and grandson of Naravarman, was living in the year 473 A. D.. His date certainly was 437 A. D.. The Mandasor inscription gives a complete history of the temple built by a guild of silk-weavers, who had migrated from the central or southern Gujerat into Daśapura on the banks of the river Sivanī. The interpretation of an important stanza in the Mandasor inscription has given rise to much controversy. The stanza reads : बहुना समतीतेन कालेनान्यैश्च पार्थिवैः । व्यस्यीर्यते कदेशोऽस्य भवनस्य ततोऽधुना. It has been proposed by Sarma (I. C. Oct. 1936) that the stanza points to the fact that a part of the building was destroyed ( व्यस्यीर्यत ) by other kings ( अन्यैः पार्थिवैः ).

He argues that a massive building like that cannot be said to have fallen in disrepair within a period of thirty-six years. These 'other kings,' according to Sarma, must have been the Hūṇas, who reinvaded that part of the country, in about 522 M. E.. The Hūṇa king, he further adds, still had control of that province in 473 A. D. and hence the name of the king has not been mentioned in the latter part of the inscription. This supposition is supported, according to Sarma, even by the evidence gathered from the Mañju-srī-mūlkalpa. Pisharoti, on the other hand, suggests (S. K. Aiyangar Commemoration Volume) that the building was repaired 529 years after its construction in 493 M. E., that is to say, in 966 A.D.. This suggestion can be easily put aside by a reference to the script of the inscription, which does not certainly belong to such a late date. Further the identity of the guild which built the temple and later repaired it cannot reasonably be supposed to have been recognised throughout more than five hundred years. The assumption of Sarma that the 'other kings,' namely, the Hūṇas, demolished a part of the temple cannot be likewise accepted as possible. There is in the words, अन्यैः पार्थिवैः, a suggestion of 'several' kings. How many Hūṇa kings, it may be asked, could have ruled during the short interval between 437 A. D. and 473 A. D. ? It may further be asked why only 'one part' of the temple was demolished and not the whole. Moreover the Hūṇas were never known to be opposed to temples, and temples of the Sun-god were particularly sacred to them. The true reference in this stanza seems to be to the fact that, through the indifference of several kings (अन्यैः पार्थिवैः is द्वेता वृत्तिया), during thirty-six years, one part of the temple fell into disrepair. It is quite possible that one corner of the structure suffered

decay even within thirty-six years of its construction. The indifference of several kings was, as has been indicated elsewhere, due to many reasons. This reference in the Mandasor inscription certainly provides important evidence for the reconstruction of the Gupta history after Kumāra Gupta I. It may thus be assumed that during the reigns of several kings, namely Kumāra Gupta I, Skanda Gupta, Pura Gupta and Narasimha Gupta Bālāditya, one part of the temple fell into disrepair. On account of the disturbed political conditions prevailing in the times of the above-mentioned Gupta sovereigns, the repairs to the temple could not obviously be undertaken. Narasimha Gupta was trying, as seen elsewhere, to restore peace, which was not to be found during the last days of Skanda Gupta's regime, and the unhappy interregnum of Pura Gupta. In Kumāra Gupta II's time, the guild of silk-weavers found sufficient time, money, and peace to undertake repairs to the temple of the Sun. Malwa thus seems to have been regained by the Imperial Guptas. Commercial activities were greatly encouraged and the guild of silk-weavers had consequently become sufficiently wealthy during this period. These facts clearly indicate how the work of rebuilding the empire was constantly progressing even under Kumāra Gupta II. Kumāra Gupta II subsequently assumed the title of Kramāditya presumably in imitation of his illustrious predecessors, Candra Gupta II and Skanda Gupta, who had assumed the title of Vikramāditya. Kumāra Gupta II issued coins only of the Archer type, which are generally divided into two classes according to fabric. The second class of coins shows a long circular legend, महाराजाधिराज श्रीकुमारगुप्त क्रमादित्य. On both of these classes of coins, only first syllable of the king's name, Ku, is legible. There are eighteen of his gold coins in

the British Museum and two in the Indian Museum. The Mañju-srī-mūlakalpa states that Kumāra Gupta II was a remarkably religious king. The date of the Sarnath inscription of Budha Gupta, namely, 476-77 A. D., indicates that Kumāra Gupta II ruled for a short time, from 473 A. D. to 476 A. D..

The Sarnath inscription of 476 A. D. shows that the Gupta sovereign, at that time, was one Budha Gupta. He must have been evidently the immediate successor of Kumāra Gupta II on the Gupta throne. What was his relation with Pura Gupta, Narasimha Gupta and Kumāra Gupta II? Basak believes, as mentioned elsewhere, that there were two lines of the Guptas ruling simultaneously in the latter half of the 5th century A. D.. The son and successor of Skanda Gupta, according to Basak, was Kumāra Gupta of the Sarnath inscription and Budha Gupta was the son and successor of the latter. This assumption of Basak is, however, entirely without any evidence. The inscriptions do not give any genealogical lists referring to Budha Gupta. Hiuen Tsang states that Budha Gupta was the son of Sakrāditya, that is to say, of Kumāra Gupta I Mahendrāditya. It seems probable that Budha Gupta was the youngest son of Kumāra Gupta I and half-brother of Pura Gupta and Skanda Gupta. In any case it is certain that he was not the son of Kumāra Gupta II, who must have died very young. Another hypothesis also, though worthy of being taken into consideration in this connection, is not very convincing. There is a stone pillar inscription at Eran, dated 484 A. D., which mentions the name of Budha Gupta. As the dates of the Sarnath inscription of Budha Gupta and the Eran stone pillar inscription of Budha Gupta differ only by eight years and as there is, in the latter inscription, a reference to a feudatory of



Budha Gupta, it is absolutely certain that both inscriptions refer to one and the same person, namely, Budha Gupta of the Imperial Gupta dynasty, who became, after Kumāra Gupta II, the sovereign lord of the Gupta empire. It is proposed by some scholars that Budha Gupta was originally a prince-vice-roy of Malwa, perhaps the son of Govinda Gupta, who, like his father, did not acknowledge, in the beginning, the Gupta emperors of Magadha as legitimate sovereigns. Later on Budha Gupta must have overthrown Kumāra Gupta II and once more united under his own sovereignty the two principal provinces of the ancient Gupta empire, namely, Magadha and Malwa. But though Govinda Gupta is known to have refused to acknowledge the suzerainty of Pura Gupta at his time, the Mandasor inscription of silk-weavers dated 473 A.D., clearly proves that Malwa was not outside the Gupta imperial authority in Kumāra Gupta II's time. This was made possible obviously through the recuperative activities of Narasiṃha Gupta Bālāditya and Kumāra Gupta II. Further, the date of the Sarnath inscription of Budha Gupta and the last known date of Kumāra Gupta II come so close to each other that they render improbable the second hypothesis regarding the manner in which Budha Gupta is said to have come to the Gupta throne. Moreover the *dhvajastambha* of Eran was erected in 484 A. D., that is to say, eight years after the Sarnath inscription of Budha Gupta. This fact clearly indicates that Budha Gupta originally belonged to Kasi and later established his sovereignty in Eran, i.e. Malwa. Thus the exact position of Budha Gupta in the genealogical lists of the Guptas is still uncertain. The Sarnath inscription gives the earliest date of Budha Gupta, namely 476 A. D.. It is to be assumed, therefore, that Budha Gupta ascended the Gupta throne in that year, after

Kumāra Gupta II. The Eran pillar inscription records the erection of the column, which is called the *dhvajastambha* of Viṣṇu, under the name of Janārdana, by Mahārāja Matriviṣṇu and his brother, Dhanyaviṣṇu, for increasing the religious merit of their parents. It seems that in 484 A. D. Budha Gupta had established his sovereignty in some parts of the Central Provinces, and in Malwa, and was recognised as the emperor in those provinces. In the same inscription we have been told that his feudatory, Mahārāja Surāṣmicandra, was, at that time, governing the country between the Jumna and the Narmada. The two Sarnath inscriptions of Budha Gupta are of little historical interest, since they merely record dedications of images of Buddha by a Buddhist monk. Do these inscriptions, by any chance, also suggest the religion of Budha Gupta? It may be noted incidentally that the name of Budha Gupta was many times misspelt as Buddha Gupta by certain writers. There are two Damodarpur copperplates, which refer to Budha Gupta. They record two cases of transfer of land, which was effected during his regime. Apart from the importance of these copperplates from the point of view of the revenue administration at the time of the later Imperial Guptas, they testify to the fact that Budha Gupta's empire included also Puṇḍravardhana, i.e. North Bengal, which was governed by his viceroys, Uparika Mahārājas, Brahmadatta and Jayadatta. To Budha Gupta's reign also belongs the Pahadpur plate of 478-79 A. D.. The Sarnath inscriptions, the Eran pillar inscription and the Damodarpur copperplates clearly indicate that Budha Gupta's empire included the Kasi country, Central India, and Bengal. The view put forth by Allan and Vincent Smith that Budha Gupta was merely a provincial ruler of Malwa is now sufficiently disproved by

these inscriptions. The work of rebuilding the Gupta empire, enthusiastically started by Narasimha Gupta Bālāditya, vigorously continued by Kumāra Gupta II, was thus finally accomplished by Budha Gupta, who ruled over the whole empire from Bengal to Western India. Fa Hien, who visited India in the times of Candragupta II, is naturally silent about the buildings at Nalanda, which were constructed by Śakrāditya and Budha Gupta, and about which Hiuen Tsang tells so much.

Budha Gupta issued a silver coinage of the Central India type, with his own name inscribed on it. This fact again confirms his sovereignty in that province. He is deservedly called अवनीपति on those coins. The evidence of Bharsar hoard seems to suggest that a king called Prakāśāditya came shortly after Skanda Gupta. Who was this Prakāśāditya? Allan is inclined to assign the Horseman type of coins of Prakāśāditya to Pura Gupta. But there is absolutely no evidence to substantiate this assumption. The Mañju-srī-mūlakalpa comes to our assistance in this connection. It states that Śrīmān U succeeded Kumāra Gupta II. There is the letter U on the coins of Prakāśāditya, below the king's image. This fact should conclusively prove that Śrīmān U, Prakāśāditya and Budha Gupta are one and the same person. Budha Gupta seems to have issued his imperial gold coins under the title of Prakāśāditya. S. K. Saraswati has attempted to prove on palaeographical grounds that a gold coin, illustrated by Allan, as one of Pura Gupta, is presumably that of Budha Gupta. The British Museum contains only three specimens of the Central India type of Budha Gupta's coins, and one of these bears the latest known date of this sovereign, namely, 175 G. E., that is, 494-95 A. D.. Budha Gupta was presumably the last

Gupta sovereign, who could hold sway over a large territory, which had been the heritage of the Gupta dynasty, with a few breaks, throughout over 170 years.

There is no inscriptional evidence regarding the question of the succession of the Gupta rulers after Budha Gupta. The general supposition is that the Imperial Gupta dynasty fell to pieces and perished at the end of Budha Gupta's reign, that is, in or about 496 A.D.. There is an epigraphic record testifying to the fact that, after 510 A. D., the Hūṇas invaded India, for the second time, and established their sovereignty as far as Gwalior. There is further evidence to show that the Hūṇas were defeated by Bālāditya in 526 A. D.. How are we to explain this breach of thirty years, in the Gupta history, from 496 A. D. to 526 A. D.? What Gupta sovereigns, if any, ruled during this period? According to Hiuen Tsang, Budha Gupta was succeeded by Tathāgata Gupta, after whom Bālāditya II came to the Gupta throne. It is also assumed by some scholars that Bhānu Gupta of the Eran inscription of 510-11 A.D. was ruling over Malwa while Tathāgata Gupta, the predecessor of Bālāditya II, reigned in Magadha. In the Mañju-s'rī-mūlakalpa, on the other hand, we are told that 'after the death of Budha Gupta, two kings in the Gupta line were crowned, one in Magadha and another in Gauḍa.' How are we to reconcile all these divergent opinions? A copperplate, recently discovered in the village of Gunaighar, near Comilla in Bengal, brings forth one more name, that of Vainya Gupta. There are moreover discovered three gold coins of the Archer type such as that of Candra Gupta II and Kumāra Gupta I, the legend on which has given rise to some controversy. Allan is inclined to read the name on those coins as *Candra* and assigns them to Candra Gupta III, who, according to him, be-

longed to the later Imperial Guptas. Ganguly has, on the other hand, shown (I. H. Q. IX) that a critical study of those coins would lead one to the following conclusions :

(1) The name of the king on those coins is distinctly Vainya; and the coins consequently refer to Vainya Gupta. There was no king, known from any other source, of the name of Candra Gupta III among the later Imperial Guptas.

(2) From the fabric and the type of the coins it may seem that Vainya Gupta evidently belonged to the Imperial Gupta dynasty of Magadha.

(3) He must have been an independent and a very prosperous sovereign, as the weight of his coins indicates.

(4) His Āditya title was Dvādasāḍitya.

(5) He was a devotee of Viṣṇu.

These conclusions seem to be further corroborated by the Gunaighar copperplate, which refers to Vainya Gupta. The original editor of the Gunaighar inscription had concluded that Vainya Gupta was a 'distant scion of the Imperial Gupta family and that he must have declared his independence during the troubled times following the second Hūṇa invasion, and consequent Hūṇa supremacy'. The editor further assumed that Vainya Gupta was not probably connected with the Imperial Guptas, who were generally Vaiṣṇavas, because he was professedly a Śaiva. It must however be remembered that the question of a sovereign's religion has no relevancy in the matter of deciding the dynasty to which he may have belonged. Moreover the three coins in the British Museum ascribed to Vainya Gupta bear the garuḍa standard, which fact may indicate that he was a Vaiṣṇava. Though Vainya Gupta is called Mahārāja, in the Gunaighar copperplate,

it may not be taken as evidence against his imperial authority. It may have been an error on the part of the scribe, as in the case of the Mankuwar stone image inscription of 448-49 A.D., wherein Kumāra Gupta I is designated as Mahārāja. There are many other instances of this kind; Budha Gupta is styled simply as Mahārāja in the Sarnath inscription of 477 A.D., Candragupta I is called Mahārāja in the Poona plates of Prabhavati-gupta, and both Candragupta I and Samudragupta are described as Mahārāja in the Riddhapura plates. On the other hand, it may be urged that Vainya Gupta is distinctly called Mahārājādhirāja on some clay seals of Nalanda. The object of the Gunaighar inscription is to record the fact that Vainya Gupta granted, from his victorious camp at Kṛpura, at the request of his feudatory, Mahārāja Rudradatta, some lands in the village of Kantadadak in Uttaramandala, for the maintenance of a Buddhist Vihāra. Here Mahārāja Rudradatta is mentioned as a vassal of Vainya Gupta, which fact again confirms the assumption that Vainya Gupta was an imperial ruler. Fortunately the Gunaighar copperplate is dated, namely, in 188 G.E., that is, 507 A.D.. There is a mention in it of Guṇikāgrahāra, i.e. Gunaighar, the place where the copperplate was discovered. It is known from the Damodarpur copperplates that Uparika Mahārājas ruled over Puṇḍravardhana Bhukti as viceroys of the Imperial Guptas, and that the Kumārāmātyas were in charge of certain viṣayas under them. It is very likely that this custom prevailed even in the days of Vainya Gupta; Vijayasena, who is referred to in the Gunaighar inscription, held the post of a viceroy of a Bhukti in Uttaramandala, in Samatata, under the emperor Vainya Gupta, and had a number of Kumārāmātyas serving under him as viṣaya-

patīs. It is thus evident from the Damodarpur copper-plates of Kumāra Gupta I, and the Gunaighar copper-plate of Vainya Gupta that the administration of Samatata was conducted through a viceroy from the time of Kumāra Gupta I down to 506-07 A.D.. It is pointed out by Das Gupta (I.C. January 1939) that in the last Damodarpur plate 'no member of the old vice-regal Datta family of Puṇḍravardhana Bhukti is entrusted with the administration of that Bhukti. Instead, Rājaputra Deva Bhaṭṭāraka, a son of the Gupta monarch (name not deciphered), himself held sway over the province as the viceroy of his father'. This indicates, according to Das Gupta, that something untoward happened to the Gupta supremacy over North Bengal during half a century, which intervened between the dates of the fourth and the fifth Damodarpur copperplates. He further brings forth the evidence of the recently discovered Mallasārul (Burdwan) inscription of Mahāsāmantha Vijayasena. This document seems to prove that the administration of Samatata was not conducted through Uparika Mahārāja Vijayasena under Vainya Gupta. The statement in the Mañju-srī-mūlakalpa regarding the 'separatist' Gupta family of Gauda cannot thus be relevantly explained. It seems that even after the death of Budha Gupta, Bengal continued to be governed by viceroys. As the coins definitely connect Vainya Gupta with the Imperial Guptas, it must be accepted, without doubt, that he ascended the Gupta throne after Budha Gupta and ruled at least upto 506-07 A.D.. He was, like his predecessors, a tolerant sovereign. The Gunaighar inscription suggests that he was a devotee of Mahādeva. The coins, on the other hand, indicate that he must have been a Vaiṣṇava. And there is evidence to prove that he donated lands for

the maintenance of a Buddhist Vihāra. The reference to Bhānu Gupta, as the Imperial Gupta ruler, in an inscription dated 510 A.D., makes it necessary to assume that Vainya Gupta ruled from 500 A.D. to 508-09 A. D.

Another veritable source of historical information regarding the times of Vainya Gupta is provided by the Valabhi charters of the Maitrakas, which include copper-plates discovered from various parts of Gujerat. Mandlik, Kielhorn and Fleet wrongly interpreted a reference in one of those grants, namely, प्रसमप्रणतामित्राणां मैत्रकाणाम्, and assumed that the Maitrakas were a powerful tribe of foreigners, who were defeated by Bhattachārka Senāpati. Hultsch rightly contradicted this theory and proved that Bhattachārka himself belonged to the family of the Maitrakas. How did these Maitrakas come into power and establish themselves in Surāṣṭra and Gujerat? There is absolutely no positive evidence to show that they actually rebelled against the Imperial Guptas during the period of the disintegration of their sovereignty. The title, Senāpati, and to a certain extent even the title, Mahārāja, assumed by the Maitrakas, and the reference to the third ruler in the family, Droṇasimha, in the Bhamodra Mahotta copperplate of year 183, as परममहाराजकयादानुध्यातः, point to the fact that the kings of Valabhi ruled as feudatories in the beginning. In another inscription of Droṇasimha the same king is referred to as अखिलभुवनमण्डलैकस्वामिना परमस्वामिना स्वयमुपहित-राज्याभिषेकः. The date of Droṇasimha is 183 G.E., i.e. 502 A.D.. Who was the paramount sovereign, who personally attended and performed the coronation of Droṇasimha? Three possibilities may be suggested in this connection. The sovereign may be either Yasodharman Viṣṇuvardhana of the Mandasor pillar inscription, or the Hūṇa king, Toramāṇa, of the Eran stone



pillar inscription and the Boar inscription, or finally Vainya Gupta, whose existence was revealed through a copperplate inscription from Gunaighar, in Tipperah district of East Bengal. All that the Mandasor pillar inscription of Yaśodharman Viṣṇuvardhana indicates is that that ruler's power was consolidated before 532 A.D.. From other epigraphical sources, however, it has been positively ascertained that Budha Gupta of the Imperial Gupta dynasty ruled between circa 476 A. D. and 500 A. D. and was succeeded by Vainya Gupta of the same dynasty, who reigned till at least 507 A. D.. Both these Gupta rulers are shown to have held complete sway over large territories and it must therefore be assumed that Yaśodharman Viṣṇuvardhana came into power only after 507 A. D.. So he cannot possibly have been the परमस्वामी of Droṇasimha's inscription. The last date on the coins of Budha Gupta is 176 G.E. i.e. 496 A.D.. This may indicate that upto 496 A.D. the Hūṇas had not captured any part of the Gupta dominions. The Eran pillar inscription compares Bhānu Gupta to Arjuna, thus suggesting that powerful Gupta sovereigns ruled at least till that date and that their dominions extended up to Central India. Even at the zenith of their power, the Hūṇas were masters only of a small portion of the original Gupta empire, and in Central India they never advanced beyond Ābhara, or Eastern Malwa. Further it must be remembered that, inspite of the Hūṇa occupation of Sagar district at a certain period, their next-door neighbours, namely, the Parivrajaka dynasty, owed allegiance to the Guptas at least upto 528 A. D., there being no reference whatever to Hūṇa regime in their inscriptions. So the Hūṇa king, Toramāṇa, also cannot be supposed to be the अखिलमुवन-मण्डलैकस्वामी of the inscription of Droṇasimha, dated 502

A. D. Moreover, in the territories which passed under Hūṇa domination, the Gupta era was generally given up and the Hūṇa regnal years were used, as is evidenced by the Eran Boar stone inscription of Dhanyaviṣṇu and the Gwalior inscription. But the Maitrakas uniformly used the Gupta era and therefore they could not have been feudatories of the Hūṇas. The trend of events which finally led to the Maitraka domination in Surāṣṭra and Gujerat seems to be like this: The Junagadh rock inscription of Skanda Gupta points to the fact that Surāṣṭra was definitely in the possession of the Gupta sovereigns upto 138 G. E. i.e. 457 A. D.. From the same inscription, it appears that the administration and defence of Surāṣṭra were a matter of grave concern to the Gupta emperors and they took special pains to entrust those responsibilities to particularly capable viceroys. We have been told that Parṇadatta of the Junagadh inscription was selected to be the viceroy of that province by Skanda Gupta after 'a deliberate consideration for nights and days'. The Hūṇas were almost completely vanquished by Skanda Gupta, in a terrific battle with them, as has been shown by the Bhitari pillar inscription. But the Junagadh rock inscription indicates that the enemies were still hovering on the western frontiers, those alone being then open to inroads, and so particularly able officers, like Parṇadatta, were specially appointed for the administration of Surāṣṭra. Further the civil administration of that province must have been reinforced by military officers also. The date of Bhātṭārka of the Maitraka dynasty would be two generations, that is, about forty years, before that of Droṇasiṃha. Bhātṭārka may thus be placed somewhere about 462 A. D., since the date of Droṇasiṃha is 502 A. D.. The date of Bhātṭārka,

namely, 462 A. D., roughly corresponds with the date of Parnadatta of the Junagadh rock inscription. It may therefore be reasonably assumed that Parnadatta looked after the civil administration of Surāṣṭra, while Bhaṭṭārka was later deputed there as a military commandant to reinforce the defence of the province. Later on the military officer must have been obliged, by circumstances, to enforce absolute control over the province, and Bhaṭṭārka thus ultimately became both Senāpati and governor of Surāṣṭra. In one of the Valabhi copperplates Bhaṭṭārka is referred to as मौलभूतमित्रश्रेणीबलवाहाराज्यश्रीः, which fact seems to support the above assumption. As shown elsewhere, the high posts in the administration of territories were, under the Gupta regime, hereditary. Bhaṭṭārka was consequently succeeded in the same office by Dharasena I and the latter by Droṇasimha. The Gupta sovereigns, however, could not, later on, wield even indirect control in that province and gradually, in the time of Droṇasimha, the governors and Senāpatis of Surāṣṭra assumed the status of Mahārāja, under Gupta suzerainty. Bhaṭṭārka and Dharasena I were satisfied with the title of Senāpati, while Droṇasimha assumed the title of Mahārāja. It is quite evident from the inscription of Droṇasimha, dated 502 A. D., that Vainya Gupta's imperial status was still then recognised in the western provinces of the empire, namely, Kathiawar and Gujerat, since the latter is referred to, in that inscription, as परमस्वामी. The original capital of Surāṣṭra was Girinagara, and Parnadatta, and also Bhaṭṭārka, for some time, governed the province from that place. An ingenious suggestion has been made by Jagan Nath (I. C. April 1939) that the capital of the province was later on transferred to Valabhi. The Junagadh rock inscription shows how great a

source of danger, the Sudarsana lake was to the city of Girinagara. The later governors found it necessary to remove the capital away from the lake to a 'raised or lofty place.' The new capital may have been named Valabhi, because that word in Sanskrit denotes a 'lofty or raised place.'

There are few historically important inscriptions referring to the course of events which took place after Vainya Gupta's time, that is, after 509 A.D. It is likely that, according to the statement of Hiuen Tsang, Tathāgata Gupta ruled immediately after Vainya Gupta. His reign was presumably short and uneventful. He is not known either from inscriptions or from coins. After Budha Gupta and Vainya Gupta, the Gupta sovereigns continued to reign in Eastern India and many of them are known through their coins only. Even coins, which could be ascribed to Tathāgata Gupta, are not to be found. Allan tries to reconstruct the Gupta lineage after Kumāra Gupta II, on the evidence of coins, in the following manner:

(1) Candra Gupta III, Dvādasāditya (who is now proved to have been mistaken for Vainya Gupta).

(2) Viṣṇu Gupta Candrāditya.

(3) Ghaṭotkaca Gupta Kramāditya (probably the same as of the Mandasor inscription).

(4) Samācāra Gupta Narendrāditya.

(5) Jaya Prakāṇḍa Yaśa.

(6) Virasena Kramāditya.

(7) Hari Gupta.

Many of these princes are not referred to in any of the inscriptions, and their succession list, as given by Allan, is merely conjectural. Further some of those princes mentioned by Allan may have been, very probably, provincial governors or viceroys. On the other hand,

Allan has not mentioned the Gupta sovereigns, who are known from other sources. The statement of Allan cannot, therefore, be accepted as in any way convincing.

It is interesting to note that, during the last days of Budha Gupta's regime and the period that followed, the distant provinces of the Gupta empire gradually became independent. For instance, Droṇasiriṇha, the third Maitraka general of Valabhi, assumed the title of Mahārāja and presumably held independent sway over the provinces of Kathiawar and Gujerat. The Maitrakas are seen to have assumed the sovereign right of issuing independent grants of land between 502 A. D. and 526 A. D.. This fact indicates that Kathiawar remained loyal to the Gupta sovereigns during the life-time of Budha Gupta and Vainya Gupta, but the mask of loyalty was later on openly cast aside, and the later Maitraka Mahārājas issued grants of land without even referring to the ruling Gupta emperors. A comparison of the Maitraka grants with the grants issued by the royal officers under the Imperial Guptas, such as, the Indor plate of Skanda Gupta, or the Damodarpur plates of Budha Gupta, at once brings forth the difference in the attitude towards the Gupta sovereigns of these two types of donors. There are many other grants, which also indicate the gradual process of the achievement of political independence by several old feudatories of the Gupta emperors. Hastin, who had been a feudatory of the Guptas, ruled over the country between Allahabad and Maihar, and started issuing grants of land in his own name, even during the life-time of Budha Gupta. The earliest charter issued by Hastin was dated in 475-76 A. D. and was discovered at Khoh in Nagoda state. Hastin went still farther and assumed the imperial prerogative of issuing coins in his own name; five

silver coins bearing his name are preserved in the Indian Museum. There are other independent grants of Hastin, such as, the Khoh copper-plate of 163 G. E., and the Majhgavan copperplate of 191 G. E.. The Bhumara stone pillar inscription of Hastin and Sarvanātha is of great administrative significance, in as much as it records the erection, at Ambhada, of a pillar to show the boundary between the territories of these two Mahārājas. In case of any dispute regarding the boundary, the two Mahārājas had agreed, according to the inscription, to settle it by means of arbitration of the Imperial Gupta sovereign. But even in this case they do not clearly mention their suzerain, which fact again indicates that they had acquired independent status. The son of Hastin was Saṅkṣobha. His grant at Khoh, dated 209 G. E., as well as the three grants of Sarvanātha, at the same place, dated 512-13 A. D., which do not refer to the Gupta emperors, also confirm the above assumption. The inscriptions of the Maitrakas of Valabhi, of the Parivrajaka Mahārājas, and of the Uchchakalpa Mahārājas, thus, clearly show which provinces had become independent and to what extent, in the days following the regime of Budha Gupta and Vainya Gupta. Two facts regarding the copperplates of the Parivrajaka Mahārājas are, however, worth noticing. Upto their last known date they continued to render at least nominal homage to the Imperial Gupta dynasty, by mentioning the name 'Gupta' in the beginning of their records, if not the actual name of the ruling sovereign, in the following way: 'In the enjoyment of sovereignty by the Gupta kings, in the glorious, augmenting and victorious reign.' Secondly they all along used the Imperial Gupta era. Even before Hastin, the liberty of not mentioning, in their records, the

names of the Imperial Gupta sovereigns was taken by certain feudatory chieftains. One of the earliest instances of this kind is that of Lakṣmaṇa, who did not care to refer to the Gupta sovereigns, in his record dated 158 G. E. i.e. 477-78 A. D.. He has, however, used the Gupta era. These facts indicate that the disintegration of the Gupta empire which had been started by the Hūṇa and other foreign invasions, and which was augmented by the ambitious Vākāṭaka campaigns under Narendrasena and Prthviṣeṇa II, was considerably hastened, on the one hand, by the internal dissensions among the Guptas themselves, a typical case of this kind being that of Govinda Gupta of the Mandasor inscription, and on the other, by the gradual assumption of political independence by the former feudatories of the Imperial Guptas, which seems to have begun immediately after the death of Skanda Gupta. Apart from this historical significance of these grants, they are important from the point of view of the revenue administration, the political administration, and the economic life of the times of the later Imperial Guptas. The Gupta princes, whose existence after Kumāra Gupta II is presumed by Allan, on the evidence of their coins, could not have been imperial sovereigns. They are not referred to as such in any epigraphic records nor have they any place in the succession list of the later Imperial Guptas, as reconstructed from other sources. The fact that the names of some of them appear on coins, if confirmed, may be explained on the assumption that those scions of the imperial family tried to become politically independent and issued their own coinage. This would be another instance of the internal dissensions among the Guptas. The only definite source of information regarding the later Imperial Guptas is,

under these circumstances, the statement of Hiuen Tsang that Tathāgata Gupta<sup>1</sup> succeeded Vainya Gupta and that he, in his turn, was succeeded by his son, Bālāditya. Who was this Bālāditya?

There is a posthumous stone-pillar inscription of Goparāja, at Eran, dated 510 A. D.. It records that, in the company of a powerful sovereign, named Bhānu Gupta, a chieftain, by name Goparāja, came to the place, where the pillar is set up, and fought a battle. Goparāja was killed in the battle and his wife, who had accompanied him to Eran, burnt herself on his funeral pyre. In the Eran pillar inscription of Budha Gupta, dated 484 A. D., we are told that the brothers, Mātṛviṣṇu and Dhanya-viṣṇu, were, at that time, the feudatories of that Gupta sovereign. The same Dhanya-viṣṇu is again mentioned in another inscription, namely that of the Hūṇa king, Toramāṇa. The latter is a Vaiṣṇava inscription at Eran, which records the building of the temple in which the Varāha stands, by Dhanya-viṣṇu, the brother of the deceased Mātṛviṣṇu. It is dated in the first year of the reign of Toramāṇa. The mention of Mātṛviṣṇu as deceased indicates that Toramāṇa came, so far as his possession of Eastern Malwa is concerned, shortly after Budha Gupta, in whose time Mātṛviṣṇu set up the column at Eran bearing that Gupta sovereign's inscription of 484 A. D.. The inscription of Toramāṇa is engraved on the breast of a colossal image of the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu. The image of the boar is covered all over with elaborate sculptures, chiefly of Ṛṣis and saints clinging to its

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<sup>1</sup> Some historians seem to be inclined to identify Tathagata Gupta, referred to in the biography of Hiuen Tsang, with Vainya Gupta.



mane and bristles. It has the earth, represented as woman, hanging on to its right hand tusk, and over its shoulder, there is a small four-sided shrine, with a sitting figure in each face of it. The temple and the image are still to be seen at Eran. A critical examination of these two inscriptions of Eran, namely of Budha Gupta and of the Hūṇa king, Toramāṇa, taken in coordination with the third Eran inscription of Bhānu Gupta, leads us to the following conclusions : Toramāṇa conquered Malwa within the period of one generation after Budha Gupta. The battle at Eran, in which Goparāja died in 510 A. D., must have been evidently a battle fought by Bhānu Gupta and Goparāja against the Hūṇas led by Toramāṇa. Otherwise there would have been a reference to a battle with the Hūṇas, in the inscription of the earlier Imperial Gupta sovereign, Vainya Gupta. Toramāṇa obviously vanquished the Gupta sovereign, Bhānu Gupta, and his feudatory, Goparāja, in that battle at Eran, in 510 A. D., and consequently established his sovereignty in Malwa. The date of the Eran Boar image inscription must therefore be later than 510 A. D.. The Mañju-s'ri-mūlakalpa states that after Bhānu Gupta lost Malwa (in 510 A.D.), Toramāṇa led the Hūṇas against Magadha and obliged Bālāditya to retire to Bengal. The Hūṇa king is further said to have crowned one Prakāṣāditya as king, at Benares, in the place of Bhānu Gupta, who had absconded. Toramāṇa, however, died at Benares while he was returning westwards. This Prakāṣāditya is said to have been a son of Bālāditya (II), whose one ancestor at least had been another Bālāditya (I). All this account given by the Mañju-s'ri-mūlakalpa, judiciously supplemented by the three inscriptions of Eran, makes one feel inclined to believe that Bhānu Gupta and Bālāditya II

were one and the same person. According to the Deo Baranark inscription, a gift made by Parames'vara Bālāditya (II) was confirmed by 'the presiding authorities for the time being', namely, Parames'vara Sarvavarman and Parames'vara Avantivarman, and then finally by Jivita Gupta II. This would show that Bālāditya, whose grant was confirmed by another dynasty, namely of the Maukharis, must have flourished just before that dynasty came into power. He was therefore Bālāditya II. It should be noted that he is given the imperial title of Parames'vara, in the Deo Baranark inscription.

If we accept the authority of the Mañju-srī-mūlakalpa, Toramāṇa must be assumed to have died in or about 511 A. D., that is to say, one year after his successful war, at Eran, against Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II and Goparāja. From that date upto his final defeat, Mihirakula Hūṇa, the son of Toramāṇa, seems to have been the virtual ruler of Northern India. During that period Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya was presumably somewhere in Bengal, which fact again may have given rise to the theory of the foundation of a separatist Gupta family in Gauḍa. Bālāditya was trying to consolidate his power during the next few years. The relevant question now is: When was Mihirakula defeated and by whom? There are two conflicting theories based on two different types of sources regarding this question. Firstly there are three inscriptions, the Gwalior stone inscription of Mihirakula, the Mandasor stone pillar inscription of Yaśodharman, and the Mandasor stone inscription of Yaśodharman and Viṣṇuvardhana. Secondly there is the account given by Hiuen Tsang. It must be remembered, in this connection, that at least one century had elapsed between the dates of these two sources. Hiuen Tsang gives the name of the victorious sovereign,

who defeated Mihirakula, as *Bālāditya*. This fact, however, is not mentioned in any of the inscriptions. The Gwalior stone inscription of Mihirakula, dated in the 15th year of his reign, that is to say, in 526 A. D. (assuming that Toramāṇa died in 511 A. D.), records that a temple of the Sun-god was built by one *Mātṛceṭa*, on the mountain called *Gopa*. This indicates that Mihirakula was holding sway over Malwa at least upto 526 A. D.. Together with this inscription, we have to take into consideration the Mandasor stone pillar inscription of *Yaśodharman*. The Mandasor column was erected, like the Allahabad pillar of *Samudra Gupta*, for the purpose of commemorating the glory and power of *Yaśodharman*. In spite of an invocation to *Śiva* included in it, the inscription is generally nonsectarian. It records that the dominions of *Yaśodharman* included the whole of Northern India, from *Lauhitya*, i.e. *Brahmaputrā*, to the Western Ocean, and from the Himalayas to *Mahendragiri*. *Yaśodharman* is said to have possessed countries, 'which not even the *Guptas* or the *Hūṇas* could ever conquer.' Homage was done to him even by *Mihirakula*. 'The *Janendra*', states the inscription, 'had compelled *Mihirakula* to pay respect to his two feet.' Such statements conclusively prove that *Mihirakula* was defeated by *Yaśodharman*. Unfortunately, this important record is undated. But the date of *Yaśodharman* is given by another inscription at Mandasor. Though the opening invocations, of this second Mandasor inscription are again addressed to *Śiva*, the inscription generally is nonsectarian. It records the construction of a large well by one *Dakṣa*, whose brother, *Dharmadoṣa*, was the minister of one *Viṣṇuvardhana*. *Yaśodharman* is called, in that inscription, a tribal ruler, and king *Viṣṇuvardhana* would appear,

inspite of the fact that he assumes the titles of Rājā-dhirāja and Paramesvara, in the inscription, to have acknowledged some kind of suzerainty on the part of Yaśodharman. The date given in the Mandasor inscription of Viṣṇuvardhana is 533-34 A. D., which must have been, therefore, also the date of Yaśodharman. Jayaswal is inclined to think that 'it is evident that the very same events are recorded both in the inscription of Yaśodharman, at Mandasor, and in the inscription of 533 A. D., under the name of Viṣṇuvardhana Rājadhirāja Paramesvara.' The sovereignty of the king over Prācī (Eastern India) and North (Kashmir) is also repeated in both the inscriptions. Yaśodharman and Viṣṇuvardhana are, therefore, according to Jayaswal, one and the same person. The words, *sa eva*, in Dakṣa's inscription seem to confirm his supposition. At any rate, two things are absolutely certain: Firstly that Yaśodharman's date is about 533-34 A. D.; and secondly that before 533 A. D. and after 526 A. D., Malwa and Western India were under the governorship of Dharmadoṣa, who recognised Yaśodharman Viṣṇuvardhana as his sovereign lord. There is no earlier reference to Yaśodharman anywhere. This fact indicates that he himself founded a new empire, sometime before 533 A. D.. After the decline of the Gupta empire, the need was felt of reviving and reconstituting an all-India empire. Yaśodharman claims to have achieved this feat, by uniting under him the parts of the country which the Gupta sovereigns could not reach (south?) and also the parts which the Hūnas could not reach (east). The epithet आत्मवंश, in the inscription of Viṣṇuvardhana, may also suggest, according to Jayaswal, that Yaśodharman Viṣṇuvardhana was the very first ruler of his dynasty. How may we reconcile this inscriptional

evidence to the effect that Yaśodharman inflicted a signal defeat on Mihirakula with the statement of Hiuen Tsang that Bālāditya was the victorious hero who defeated Mihirakula and took him a prisoner? Hoernle rejects the accounts of Hiuen Tsang altogether, which is perhaps going too far. Vincent Smith suggests that there was a military alliance between Yaśodharman and Bālāditya, which fact, however, is not referred to in any of the two sources. Moreover in his inscription Yaśodharman claims supremacy over the whole of Northern India and perhaps over some provinces in the South; and this makes it impossible for Bālāditya to have reigned anywhere at that time. Fleet, Allan and Mookerji believe that Mihirakula was defeated, in the east, by Bālāditya, and, in the west, by Yaśodharman, the credit of finally crushing the Hūṇa going to the latter. Heras puts forth quite a different theory (A.B. O.R.I. 1927) based on the coordination of the two sources. He assumes that Yaśodharman defeated Mihirakula first and, later on, Bālāditya (who, according to Heras, is to be identified with Narasimha Gupta) inflicted on him the final crushing defeat, as a consequence of which, the Hūṇa king had to move in concealment and poverty and had ultimately to take refuge in Kashmir. This view, however, is untenable. We have seen that, between 526 A. D. and 533 A. D., a new dynasty, founded by Yaśodharman, claims to have established its imperial authority over vast territories. Yaśodharman boasts of having possessed under his domination even some of the former provinces of the Gupta empire. How can Bālāditya, under these circumstances, come after Yaśodharman? Moreover the statement, in the Mandasor inscription, that Mihirakula was compelled to pay homage to Yaśodharman, seems to suggest that the

credit of a decisive victory over the Hūṇa belonged to Yaśodharman. The course of events regarding the extermination of Mihirakula appears to have been as follows: Mihirakula was encountered circa 526 A. D. by Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II, and the Gupta troops are represented by Hiuen Tsang to have then taken the Hūṇa king prisoner. Before and at the time of the war with Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II, Mihirakula was the paramount sovereign, to whom the king of Magadha (Prakaṣāditya), who was installed on the throne, at Benares, by Toramāṇa, was obviously subordinate, and with whom he dared not fight, being only anxious 'to conceal his poor person.' Bālāditya II, however, consolidated his power, during his exile in Bengal presumably between 510 A. D. and 525 A.D., and then made himself bold to openly defy Mihirakula. Mihirakula was then vanquished, according to Hiuen Tsang, by Bālāditya, in the swampy country of lower Bengal, and was taken prisoner. But at the request of the Queen Mother, the Hūṇa king is said to have been set at liberty. Consequently he had to be content with a small kingdom in the North. During the next four years, presumably after the death of Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II, Yaśodharman founded his own empire. In the meanwhile, Mihirakula also had been trying to regain his lost power and again advanced towards Malwa. Yaśodharman routed him thoroughly and compelled homage from him. At the time of his war with Bālāditya, Mihirakula was a paramount sovereign. But as the Mandasor pillar inscription significantly points out, at the time of his crushing defeat by Yaśodharman, Mihirakula was merely a petty king of the Himalayas. We have seen that the Hūṇa king was compelled to take refuge in Kashmir, after his defeat

by Bālāditya, which fact corroborates the reference, in the Mandasor inscription, to the position and locality of Mihirakula. It seems that the compassion shown to Mihirakula by the Queen Mother, after his defeat by Bālāditya, was misused and was shown to be politically unwise. The Hūṇa king, who was reduced to the position of a petty chieftain in Kashmir, conquered Gāndhāra and thus made himself sufficiently strong to provoke the newly-risen sovereign, Yaśodharman. Many scholars believe that, after Yaśodharman's great victory over Mihirakula, the Hūṇas were never heard of in India. Heras, however, points out (A.B.O.R.I. 1927) that the Hūṇas again advanced under Mihirakula's brother and were ultimately defeated by Isānavarman Maukhari, as his inscription at Haraha, dated 554 A.D., indicates. The supposition that Isānavarman Maukhari fought against the Hūṇas, under the banner of Yaśodharman, is untenable. There was not much love lost between Yaśodharman and the Maukharis, as will be seen hereafter; further Isānavarman would not refer, in his inscription, so triumphantly to his victory over the Hūṇas, unless he alone were responsible for it. It is, therefore, more likely that Isānavarman defeated the Hūṇas, who had again advanced presumably under Mihirakula's brother. Even after this final defeat, the Hūṇas seem to have dominated the North-west frontier, since, in the days of Prabhākaravardhana, they were still a power to reckon with, in that part of the country, and again Rājyavardhana had to be sent to put them down. According to Modi, the Mers of Rajputana are the descendants of the ancient Hūṇas.

Though Yaśodharman claims to have extended his sway as far as the Lauhitya in the east, his eastern campaign does not seem to have permanently affected

the Gupta authority in North Bengal. For, just ten years after the Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman, the viceroy of a province in North Bengal owed allegiance, not to the 'Central Indian Janendra,' but to the Guptas. The Damodarpur copperplate inscription of 543-44 A.D. refers to a Gupta sovereign, though the name of that sovereign is unfortunately lost. In any case, he was recognised as the ruling sovereign in North Bengal. In that year, Rājaputradeva, presumably a prince belonging to the royal family, was the viceroy of Puṇḍravardhana Bhukti representing a Gupta Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja Pṛthivīpati, and under him, Svayambhudeva was the governor of the district of Koṭivarṣa. The Nagarasreṣṭhī, Rbhupāla, is also mentioned in the copperplate. An application was made, in that year, by one Amṛtadeva, an inhabitant of Ayodhyā, for the purchase of some rent-free land, at the usual price, for the provision of repairs to the temple of Śvetavarāhasvāmin in the forest, and for the perpetuation of certain supplies to the same temple. According to R.D. Bannerjee, this Damodarpur copperplate is the last known record of Bhānu Gupta, for it is Bhānu Gupta's name that Bannerjee reads on the inscription. Such a long reign extending from 510 A.D. to 544 A.D. cannot, however, be reasonably attributed to Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II. Presumably Bhānu Gupta died soon after his victory over Mihirakula, which fact must have enabled Yaśodharman to rise to imperial eminence so quickly and to proceed on his eastern campaign. Y. R. Gupte, on the other hand, reads (J. I. H.) the name, on the Damodarpur copperplate, as Kumāra Gupta, and identifies him with the son of Narasimha Gupta. This is, however, impossible, as we have already seen.



Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II is said to have been 'the bravest man on the earth, a mighty king equal to Pārtha.' No coins<sup>1</sup> of this Gupta sovereign have so far been discovered. According to Hiuen Tsang, this Bālāditya, too, was a great patron of Buddhism. He is said to have been greatly moved by Mihirakula's cruelties to the Buddhists and was consequently inspired to fight against the Hūna tyrant.

Another Gupta sovereign of the name of Mahārājādhirāja Gopacandra is mentioned in the recently discovered inscription of Mahāsāmanta Vijayasena at Mallasarul. He is said to be the same person as Nara-siṃha Bālāditya, the son of Bhānu Gupta (? Vainya Dvādasāditya), for, it is assumed that the letter *go* is found on the coins generally ascribed to Bālāditya. Mahārāja Vijayasena is supposed to have served under Bhānu Gupta (? Vainya Gupta) as well as Gopacandra, obviously in a more dignified position under the latter. Sufficient evidence, however, has been presented in favour of the identification of Bhānu Gupta and Bālāditya (II). It is likely that Gopacandra ruled for some time as an Imperial Gupta monarch, after Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II. No information has come forth, from any other source, regarding the regime of Gopacandra.

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1 Numismatic evidence is brought forth to identify Bhanu Gupta with Vainya Gupta. It is presumed (I.C. April 1939, Dikshit) that the coins of Vainya Gupta have on them the letter 'म', between the king's feet. But the course of events as reconstructed above, from several other sources, clearly seems to go against this supposition. The achievements of Bhanu Gupta, referred to in the Eran posthumous stone pillar inscription of Goparaja, dated 510 A. D., have nowhere been ascribed to Vainya Gupta.

From the account of Hiuen Tsang we are given to understand that Bhānu Gupta was succeeded by Vajra, 'who was not a powerful king at all.' Prakāṭāditya is another successor of Bhānu Gupta mentioned by the Mañju-s'rī-mūlakapa. Vajra and Prakāṭāditya may have been brothers. No epigraphic records, however, refer to either of these monarchs; nor are any coins belonging to them available. They seem to have been the last of the so-called Later Imperial Guptas. One thing, however, is certain, namely, that the Gupta empire fell to pieces only after circa 530 A.D.. The inscriptions of the Parivrājaka dynasty, that is to say, the inscriptions of Mahārāja Hastin, dated 156, 163, 191 and 198 G.E. and of Mahārāja Saṅkṣobha, dated 199 and 209 G. E., and the inscriptions of Sarvanātha of Uchchakalpa dynasty, ranging from 191 G.E. to 214 G. E., indicate, at any rate, that the Guptas exercised some sort of suzerainty even upto 533 A. D..

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## CHAPTER VII

### THE LATER GUPTAS OF MALWA AND MAGADHA

The fall of the Later Imperial Guptas coincided with the rise of the Maukhari dynasty. It was probably on account of the Maukhari ascendancy in Ayodhya, in the time of *Isānavarman* Maukhari, that *Amṛtadeva*, the donor of the *Damodarpur* copperplate, dated 543-44 A.D., left his native place, Ayodhya, and went to the distant *Bhukti* of *Puṇḍravardhana*. The short period, after the death of *Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II*, circa 530 A.D., saw many vicissitudes in the history of Northern India. Three Gupta sovereigns, *Gopacandra*, *Vajra*, and *Prakāṣāditya*, have been differently mentioned to have succeeded to the Gupta imperial heritage, after *Bhānu Gupta*; but they were obviously unable to preserve it. *Yaśodharman*<sup>1</sup> suddenly rose to a position of imperial eminence, rendered a crushing defeat to *Mihirakula*, shortly before 533 A.D., took advantage of the notorious weakness of the successors of *Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II* to launch on his eastern campaigns, and extended his

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1. It is suggested that *Yaśodharman Visnuvardhana* belonged to *Thaneshwar*, because in his inscription, he says that 'he would not bow down his head before anyone except *Sthanu*', who must have been the tutelary god at *Thaneshwar*.

territories as far as the Laubhitya. There was another dynasty growing in power at this time. Inscriptions of Barabar and Nagarjuni disclose the existence of a line of Maukhari Varmans, who were the Sāmantas of Gaya district, in the times of the later Imperial Guptas. Harivarman Maukhari, belonging to another line of the dynasty, who is styled as Mahārāja in the Asirgarh seal inscription, seems to have become the king of a province in Eastern Magadha, even while the later Imperial Guptas were still ruling over Western Magadha, with Kasi as their capital. 'It looks as if the Guptas, whose power was gradually diminishing, were forced to retreat westwards giving place to the Maukhari kings, who were steadily but surely building up an empire' (Pires: *The Maukharis*). Īśvaravarman, who is styled as Mahārāja in the Asirgarh inscription, as Kṣitipati in the Haraha inscription, and as Nṛpati in the Jaunpur inscription, was another great sovereign belonging to the rising dynasty of the Maukharis. He seems to have been a contemporary of Bhānu Gupta and his successors. His power increased presumably as the result of the decline of the Imperial Gupta sovereignty, after the death of Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II. The stone inscriptions, of the Maukharis are generally found in Jaunpur and Bara Banki districts of the United Provinces. There was, besides the dynasties of Yaśodharman and of the Maukharis, another dynasty to be reckoned with in that period. It was the dynasty of the Later Guptas of Malwa. In the Deo Baranark inscription of Jīvita Gupta II, which records the continuance of the grant of a village in South Bihar, a reference is made to Bālāditya and after him to the Maukharis, Sarvavarman and Avantivarman. Not a word is said about the later Imperial Gupta contemporaries in Magadha, of these

two Maukhari kings, in connection with the previous grants of the village. The inscription, though damaged, clearly indicates absolute sovereignty of Sarvavarman and Avantivarman in Magadha, and thus precludes the possibility of any members of the Gupta Imperial family exercising any substantial control over there. It is, therefore, absolutely certain that, during the interval which elapsed between the death of Bālāditya II and the rise of Jīvitā Gupta II, there were no Gupta kings in Magadha worth taking notice of. But besides the Imperial Guptas, there was another line of the Guptas, who had been dominating the eastern parts of Malwa. They are referred to in the Apsad inscription of Ādityasena Gupta. R. D. Bannerjee assumes that the Gupta kings, mentioned in the Apsad inscription, were rulers of Magadha, on the basis of a statement, in that inscription, that Mahāsena Gupta, one of the Gupta kings referred to there, vanquished a king of Assam and that his glory was sung on the banks of Lauhitya. This could not have been possible, according to Bannerjee, unless Mahāsena Gupta and other Gupta kings, mentioned in the Apsad inscription, had been ruling in Magadha. Other historians believe that the Guptas of the Apsad inscription were the direct successors of the Imperial Guptas of Magadha. But the Deo Baranark inscription conclusively proves that, between Bālāditya II and Jīvitā Gupta II, there was not ruling, in Magadha, any important king belonging to the Gupta dynasty. Moreover Hiuen Tsang, who visited Magadha in the days of Harṣa, mentions one Pūrṇavarman as the occupant of the Magadha throne. He does not say a word about Mādhava or his father, who were the Apsad inscription Gupta contemporaries of Harṣa, in connection with Magadha. Jayaswal accepts the statement of

the Mañju-s'rī-mūlakalpa that 'these later Guptas were the kings of Gaudas, who, later on, from the time of Deva Gupta, son of Ādityasena Gupta, became kings of Magadha.' But this statement too cannot be supported by epigraphic evidence. The existence of Gupta kings of Malwa is testified by Bāṇa, in his reference to the two sons of the king of Malwa (not named), Kumāra Gupta and Mādhava Gupta, in the Harṣacarita. Further a Gupta king, named Deva Gupta, hostile to the family of Harṣa, is also mentioned in the Madhuban plate inscription. The Apsad inscription gives the genealogy of those Gupta kings, but does not mention the country where they had established their sovereignty. It, however, refers to one Mādhava Gupta, who was 'wishing for the company of S'rī Harṣadeva.' This reference corroborates the statement in Bāṇa's Harṣacarita. Mahāsena Gupta, the king of Malwa mentioned in the Apsad inscription, was presumably obliged to acknowledge fealty to Prabhākaravardhana, who was 'an axe to the creeper of the glory of Malwa,' and consequently sent his sons to act as companions to the sons of Prabhākaravardhana. In the days of S'rī Harṣa and even before that time, direct control over Magadha was exercised not by the Guptas, but by the Varmans. The memory of Varman sovereignty in Magadha had not died away even at the time of Sirpur stone inscription of Mahāsiva Gupta.

Having thus proved that the Gupta kings, mentioned in the Apsad inscription, had been ruling in Malwa, we have to tackle the problem of their relationship with the later Imperial Guptas. It appears, from the Apsad inscription, as if the first three members of this line of the Guptas were contemporaries of the first three Maukhari rulers of Hari-

varman's line. In this case, according to Pires, 'the Guptas of Malwa could not have been the direct descendants of the Imperial line, for, the first three members of the Malwa line would, thus, become contemporaries of Budha Gupta, Vainya Gupta, Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II and his successors.' Bloch suggests that Kṛṣṇa Gupta, the first of the eleven Gupta kings of Malwa, was the same as Govinda Gupta, the son of Candrar Gupta II and Dhruvadevi, of the clay seal from Vaisāli. This cannot be, however, chronologically possible. It is more likely that Kṛṣṇa Gupta was a successor of Govinda Gupta and Ghaṭotkaca Gupta, who are mentioned in the recently discovered inscriptions of Mandasor and Tumain respectively. From the time of Govinda Gupta, i.e. circa 467 A. D., to the time of Kṛṣṇa Gupta, this branch of the Imperial Gupta dynasty had considerably declined, on account of foreign invasions and local disturbances. After the death of Budha Gupta, of the Imperial line, Kṛṣṇa Gupta of Malwa seems to have started on a campaign to make his line prosperous and politically powerful. He was a contemporary of Harivarman, the first king of the other rising dynasty, namely, the Maukharis. It appears from the Asirgarh inscription, that Harivarman checked the Hūṇa onslaught through the military assistance which he gave to the Imperial Gupta sovereign. Presumably as a result of this he received some territories in recompense. In the Aphsad inscription Kṛṣṇa Gupta is said to have engaged a दमरति, a particularly proud foe, which reference may suggest either that Kṛṣṇa Gupta entered into contest with Harivarman Maukhari or that he fought against Yaśodharman, who must have been gathering strength since after circa 510 A. D.. The second alternative seems to be more probable in view

of the fact that a daughter of Kṛṣṇa Gupta, named Harṣaguptā, was given in marriage to Ādityavarman, the son of Harivarman and Jayasvāminī, who succeeded Harivarman, on the Maukhari throne. Harṣa Gupta, the son of Kṛṣṇa Gupta, and the second king of the Aṃśad inscription Gupta line of Malwa, was engaged, according to that inscription, in terrific battles, and was 'adorned by several wounds from many weapons on his chest.' It is quite certain that Ādityavarman, the son and successor of Harivarman and the brother-in-law of Harṣa Gupta, was not obliged to wage any wars with enemies. It has already been seen that by 533 A. D., Yaśodharman had extended his sovereignty as far as Lauhitya, and that in 543 A. D., the Guptas were again regarded as sovereigns in that province. This fact proves that the success of Yaśodharman was short-lived. The Imperial Gupta dynasty had almost fizzled out after the death of Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II. Who, then, was responsible for the downfall of Yaśodharman? It seems that the Maukharis led by Īśvaravarman, the successor of Ādityavarman, and the Guptas of Malwa under Harṣa Gupta and his successor, Jīvita Gupta I, made common cause, presumably after the matrimonial alliance between the two families, and jointly overthrew Yaśodharman. The reference to the wars, which Harṣa Gupta is said to have fought, must be understood in this way. In the Jaunpur inscription of Īśvaravarman, we are told that 'a spark of fire, which had come from Dhārā, was extinguished by Īśvaravarman.' This 'spark from Dhārā' was, according to Pires, Yaśodharman of Thaneshwar. There were thus left, for some time, in the political field of Northern India, only two dynasties, namely, the Guptas of Malwa and the Maukharis of Kanauj. Two other dynasties,



the Gaudas and the Puṣyabhūtiś, came on the scene soon after. The most important inscriptions, from the point of view of the history of this period, are the Aphsad inscription, the Deo Baranark inscription, the Asirgarh copper seal, the Damodarpur copperplate of 543 A. D., the Madhuban plate inscription, the Banskhera inscription, the Jaunpur inscription and the Haraha inscription. There are also a few coins apparently belonging to the Maukhari dynasty. These epigraphic sources taken in coordination with the Harṣacarita of Bāṇa help us to fix up the chronology of the Guptas of Malwa and the Maukharis.

After the downfall of Yaśodharman, as the result of the combined efforts on the part of the Guptas of Malwa and the Maukharis, Jīvita Gupta I, who was a junior contemporary of Īśvaravarman Maukhari, succeeded in reestablishing the power of his family on firmer grounds. According to the Aphsad inscription, he is said to have made his power felt as far as 'seaside shores.' The haughty foes on the seaside, mentioned in that inscription, were presumably the Gaudas, who had already launched on a career of conquest, about that time. Jayaswal's assumption that the later Guptas were in Gauda or Bengal, cannot, therefore, be accepted. The supposition that the Gaudas themselves are referred to in the Aphsad inscription as the foes on 'seaside shore,' is corroborated by a reference to the Gaudas as samudrāsrayāḥ, in the Haraha inscription, dated 554 A. D., of Īśānavarman, who was the son of Īśvaravarman and Upaguptā, the latter being obviously a Gupta princess, and the successor of Īśvaravarman. The Gaudas seem to have been the predecessors of Saśāṅka, who played a prominent part in the times of Śrī Harṣa. They were, however,

not finally put down by Jivita Gupta I. The Maukharis, who must have taken care to arrest the eastward expansion of the Guptas, must have been also responsible for the final extermination of the Gaudas. The successor of Jivita Gupta I was Kumāra Gupta, who should be called Kumāra Gupta of Malwa and not Kumāra Gupta III, as some scholars have done. This Kumāra Gupta does not obviously belong directly to the line of the Imperial Gupta sovereigns. Kumāra Gupta of Malwa was one of the most successful kings of the later Gupta dynasty. The Haraha inscription of Isānavarman, dated 554 A. D., provides us with ample material regarding that monarch's very eventful career. Isānavarman was a contemporary of Kumāra Gupta of Malwa. This fact, mentioned in the Haraha inscription fully confirms the earlier assumption regarding the contemporaneity of the first three Maukhari kings with the first three Gupta kings of Malwa. The military activities, which Jivita Gupta I had started against the Gaudas of Bengal, were continued by his successor, Kumāra Gupta. The Gaudas were advancing from their 'proper realm,' which comprised Western Bengal as it bordered on the sea and also included Karṇasuvarṇa and Rādhāpurī (J. A. S. B. 1908). Kumāra Gupta must have won a victory, temporary as it may seem to have been, over them, and established his sovereignty in that part. The Damodarpur copperplate of 543-44 A. D., which has already been referred to, mentions that, in that year, the viceroy of Puṇḍravardhana was Rājaputradeva, a member of the royal family, who represented a Gupta sovereign, whose name is lost. R. D. Bannerjee's suggestion that the plate referred to Bhānu Gupta has already been shown to be unacceptable. Y. R. Gupta read (J. I. H. IV) the name of the Gupta

suzerain as *Kumāra*. His assumption, however, that this *Kumāra Gupta* was the son of *Narasimha Gupta* is also untenable. Presumably, *Kumāra Gupta* of the *Damodarpur* copperplate is *Kumāra Gupta* of *Malwa*, who was, according to the *Aphsad* inscription and the *Haraha* inscription, sufficiently victorious in his eastern campaigns. The *Haraha* inscription of *Isānavarman* clearly mentions that he was defeated by *Kumāra Gupta* of *Malwa*. *Isānavarman*, however, soon regained the declining fortunes of his family. As pointed out elsewhere, he was responsible for a *Maukhari* victory over the *Hūṇas*, who had again advanced, according to *Heras*, under the leadership of a brother of *Mihirakula*. *Isānavarman* further claims victories over the *Āndhras*, the *Sūlikas*, and the *Gauḍas*. The *Āndhra* king of that time was *Mādhavarman II*, of the *Viṣṇukunḍin* family. There is a great diversity of opinion regarding the exact identification of *Sūlikas*. Fleet believes that they were the *Mūlikas* of the north-western frontier. According to *H. N. Shastri*, they belonged to *Kaliṅga* and *Vidarbha*. As a matter of fact they seem to have been, as suggested by *Raychaudhari*, a branch of the *Cālukyas*. The *Mahākūṭa* inscription, however, tells us that, in the 6th century A. D., *Kīrtivarman I* of the *Cālukya* dynasty achieved a victory over the kings of *Āṅga*, *Vaṅga* and *Magadha*.

*Isānavarman* was the first *Maukhari* king to have assumed the imperial title of *Mahārājādhirāja*. His imperial status must have given rise to a feud between him and *Kumāra Gupta* of *Malwa*, who too was aspiring for imperial power. *Kumāra Gupta* is said to have been plunged into a 'sea of difficulties.' In the *Aphsad* inscription, it is claimed that he 'churned that formidable milk-ocean, the cause of the attainment of

fortune,' which was the army of the glorious Maukhari sovereign, *Isānavarman*. This was not an empty boast on his part. His victory over the Maukhari king is mentioned in the *Haraha* inscription and his sovereignty in eastern India, temporary as it might have been, is clearly indicated by the *Damodarpur* copperplate. *Kumāra Gupta* is said to have 'ascended the funeral pyre' at *Prayāga*, which obviously formed a part of his dominions. This fact does not, in any way, imply that he was ultimately defeated by *Isānavarman*. The Maukhari inscriptions do not claim any victory over the Guptas at that time. The rivalry for supremacy which had started between *Kumāra Gupta* and *Isānavarman*, seems to have continued even in the days of their respective successors, *Dāmodara Gupta* and *Sarvavarman Maukhari*. The *Aphsad* inscription mentions that *Dāmodara Gupta* died in a battle against the *Maukharis*, 'whose elephants had caused the death of *Hūṇa* soldiers.' The name of the Maukhari king is, however, not mentioned in the inscription. *Dāmodara Gupta* evidently gave the *Maukharis* a tough fight as he claims to have 'broken up the proudly-stepping array of the Maukhari elephants.' He fainted and ultimately expired on the battlefield. Though the name of his Maukhari enemy is not mentioned in the *Aphsad* inscription, we know, from the *Asirgarh* seal inscription, that he must have been *Sarvavarman*. *Isānavarman* and his queen, *Lakṣmīdevī*, had two sons, *Sūryavarman* and *Sarvavarman*. The former never ascended the throne. The *Asirgarh* copper seal of *Sarvavarman* gives the whole genealogy of the *Maukharis*, from *Harivarman* downwards. The queens of *Ādityavarman* and *Is'varavarman*, whose names are given as *Harṣaguptā* and *Upaguptā* respectively, seem to have been Gupta princesses.

Can we connect the Maukharis with the locality, in which the copper seal of Sarvavarman was discovered? Asirgarh is in Burhanpur district of the Central Provinces, which must have been a Maukhari possession. This seal designates Harivarman, Ādityavarman and Isvaravarman as Mahārājas. This may suggest that Sarvavarman did not like to trace his descent back to Sāmantas. Moreover, those three Maukharis had been sufficiently prosperous to deserve the title of Mahārāja. Isānavarman and his son, Sarvavarman, who is described as the most devout worshipper of Mahesvara, are called Mahārājādhirāja, in the Asirgarh seal. According to Pires, 'from the extent of Sarvavarman's sway as far north as Nirmanḍa, we may conclude that the Hūṇas, defeated by Sarvavarman, were those of Kashmir, against whom Prabhākaravardhana had to engage.' The Deo Barnark inscription acknowledges only Sarvavarman and Avanti-varman, as sovereigns (Paramesvaras) in that province, between the times of Bālāditya II, on the one hand, and Jivita Gupta II, on the other. The death of Dāmodara Gupta must have made this advance of the Maukharis, in that province, possible. Though Sarvavarman's brother, Sūryavarman, never ascended the Maukhari throne, one Sūryavarman is described, in the Sirpur stone inscription of Mahāsīva Gupta, as 'born in the unblemished family of the Varmans, great on account of their mastery over Magadha.' This reference coupled with the Deo Baranark inscription seems to indicate that the temporary sovereignty, which Kumāra Gupta of Malwa had secured in Magadha, passed, for a time, from the Guptas to the Maukharis. Mahāsena Gupta, the son and successor of Dāmodara Gupta, however, retrieved the Gupta authority and once more extended his conquest 'as far as Lauhitya.' The exact identity

of this Gupta monarch is made clear by a reference in the *Harṣacarita*. We have been told, in the *Harṣacarita*, that two princes from Malwa, Kumāra Gupta and Mādhava Gupta, were sent to the court of Prabhākara-varḍhana to act as companions to his sons, Rājyavardhana and Harṣavardhana. While the immediate predecessors of Mahāsenā Gupta, namely, Kumāra Gupta and Dāmodara Gupta, had been busy with their eastern campaigns, a new family was coming into prominence in the west. That was the family of the Puṣyabhūti and they were trying to establish themselves at Thaneshwar, which place was vacated by Yaśodharman. Hiuen Tsang mentions one Śīlāditya on the throne of Molapo, that is, Malwa, in the latter half of the 6th century A. D.. He may have been connected with Yaśodharman, and it is also likely that he was aspiring for the imperial throne of Malwa. But there were already, in Malwa, two powerful dynasties, the Guptas and the Puṣyabhūti. These two royal dynasties seem to have formed an alliance against ambitious Śīlāditya. Ādityavardhana, who is mentioned as the progenitor of the Puṣyabhūti dynasty, was married to a Gupta princess, Mahāsenaguptā, who was presumably a sister of Mahāsenā Gupta. This policy of matrimonial alliance adopted by the Guptas of Malwa seems to have been an imitation of a similar policy followed by the Imperial Guptas of Magadha. The later Guptas of Malwa contracted such alliance first with the Maukharis and, later, with the Puṣyabhūti. The son of Ādityavardhana and Mahāsenaguptā was Prabhākaravardhana, who achieved political domination quickly and to such an extent that he soon vanquished Śīlāditya, and became 'an axe to the creeper of the glory of Malwa.' At the same time, Prabhākaravardhana had to put down the Hūṇas and came to be regarded as 'a

lion to the Hūṇa deer.' The intimate relations between Mahāsenā Gupta and Prabhākaravardhana are clearly indicated by the Madhuban grant and the Sonpat copper seal inscriptions of Harṣavardhana, which mention Mahāsenaguptādevī as the mother of Prabhākaravardhana, and also by the Apsad inscription, which alludes to the companionship of Mādhava Gupta, the son of Mahāsenā Gupta, and Harṣavardhana, the son of Prabhākaravardhana. These inscriptions considered in coordination with the Harṣacarita make it amply clear that Mādhava Gupta, the son of a Malwa king, who was, according to the Harṣacarita, a companion of Rājyavardhana and Harṣavardhana, and Mādhava Gupta of the Apsad inscription, who was 'wishing for the company of Śrī Harṣadeva,' are one and the same person. It is also certain that the king of Malwa referred to in the Harṣacarita, though not named, was Mahāsenā Gupta.

There may have been several reasons for the Puṣyabhūti-Gupta alliance, alluded to in the inscriptions and the Harṣacarita. Firstly, Mādhava Gupta and his younger brother, Kumāra Gupta, were sent to Prabhākaravardhana's court, because they were closely related to the family of the Puṣyabhūtis. Secondly, Mahāsenā Gupta's diplomatic policy required that he should respect the newly-rising dynasty of the Puṣyabhūtis. The third and the most important reason for this Puṣyabhūti-Gupta alliance seems to be the sword of the Maukharis, which must have all along been hanging over the head of Mahāsenā Gupta. The Maukhari king had defeated Mahāsenā Gupta's father, Dāmodara Gupta, and had established his sovereignty in Magadha. Mahāsenā Gupta was, therefore, suspicious about the intentions of the Maukharis. He feared that they would

again force open the conflict which was started by Kumāra Gupta and was continued by Dāmodara Gupta. But no struggle took place between the Guptas and the Maukharis in the time of Mahāsenā Gupta. According to the Apsad inscription, however, Mahāsenā Gupta defeated a king, named Susthitavarman, and his fame is said to have been sung 'on the banks of Lauhitya.' This statement has given rise to much controversy. The important problem, in this matter, is the identification of Susthitavarman. This statement, in the Apsad inscription, is preceded by an account of the Maukhari-Gupta conflict, in the days of Isānavarman and Kumāra Gupta and of Sarvavarman and Dāmodara Gupta. It was, therefore, believed by Hoernle and Vincent Smith, whose view in this matter is supported by Mookerjee and Aiyangar, that the statement in question must necessarily be referring to a Maukhari-Gupta feud. The fact that the name of the foe of Mahāsenā Gupta, Susthitavarman, ended in *varman* seemed to corroborate their view. An objection, which could be urged against this theory, was with regard to the latter part of the statement, where we are told that Mahāsenā Gupta's fame was sung on the banks of Lauhitya. How could it be that Mahāsenā Gupta achieved victory in one region while the fame of that victory reached another distant region? Mookerjee points out, in this connection, that the reference does not indicate that Mahāsenā Gupta's actual conquests extended upto to the river Lauhitya, that is to say, upto Assam, as a result of his victory over Susthitavarman. He insists that distinction must be made between the limit of the actual conquest and the limit of the consequent fame. Moreover, Lauhitya merely represents, according to him, a traditional region where any victor's glory is said to be sung, as,



even in the Mandasor pillar inscription of Yasodharman, Lauhitya is mentioned in a similar sense. All this argument, however, lacks historical precision. The river Lauhitya cannot be looked upon merely as a 'traditional limit of the conqueror's fame.' The instance of Yasodharman, referred to by Mookerjee, itself goes against him. We know that Yasodharman was sufficiently victorious in his eastern campaigns and must have actually reached Assam. Though the predecessors of Mahāsena Gupta vigorously fought with their Maukhari rivals, he himself, being apprehensive about the result, tried, as far as possible, to avoid any military encounter with the Maukharis, as would seem evident from the scrupulousness with which he created and kept up an alliance with the Puṣyabhūti. Further, no coins of any Maukhari king, named Sūthitavarman, are so far discovered, though we have coins belonging to Sarvarman and Avantivarman, who are said to be Sūthitavarman's immediate predecessor and immediate successor respectively. The name of Sūthitavarman again does not occur in any Maukhari inscription. The Deo Barnark inscription of Jivita Gupta II, which mentions the names of Sarvarman and Avantivarman, does not mention that of Sūthitavarman, who is said to have reigned between those two Maukhari kings. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that Sūthitavarman did not belong to the Maukhari dynasty. While the long-drawn feud between the families of the Maukharis and the Guptas of Malwa was going on in Bengal and Magadha, a new dynasty was established in Assam, which claimed descent from Bhagadatta. A king belonging to this new dynasty of Assam, named Sūthitavarman, was a contemporary of Mahāsena Gupta. This fact is clearly indicated by the Nidhanapur copperplate and the Nalanda

seal of Bhāskaravarman. The obvious association between Susthitavarman and the river Lauhitya, which is suggested by the Aphasad inscription, would seem to support the assumption that, in that inscription, Susthitavarman of the Nidhanapur plate is referred to. Mookerji raises an objection that Mahāsena Gupta, who was allied with the Puṣyabhūti, cannot be supposed to have been antagonistic to the Varmans of Assam, since, immediately after this period, we hear of Harṣa-Bhāskaravarman alliance. This objection may be set aside by pointing out that the Puṣyabhūti-Varmān alliance was brought about only after Harṣavardhana had ascended the throne, and that it may not have been even thought of in the days of Harṣa's father, Prabhākaravardhana. Moreover there was some special occasion which led to that alliance. On the other hand, in Prabhākaravardhana's time, the marriage was celebrated between his daughter, Rājyaśrī, and the Maukhari prince, Grahavarman, thus uniting the families of the Puṣyabhūti and the Maukharis. It was, therefore, not possible for Mahāsena Gupta, who was an ally of Prabhākaravardhana, to attack the Maukharis, who were closely related to Prabhākaravardhana. Susthitavarman could not, therefore, have been a Maukhari king. Aiyangar argues that if Susthitavarman of Assam, who was a contemporary of Mahāsena Gupta, had gone to war with the latter, that fact was likely to be mentioned in connection with the embassy that came to Harṣavardhana from Assam. But the battle between the Guptas of Malwa and the Varmans of Assam was an affair with which Harṣavardhana had nothing to do whatsoever. A reference to it on the part of the embassy, therefore, cannot be regarded as essential. It is thus certain that Mahāsena Gupta defeated Susthitavarman of Assam and extended his

authority and fame as far as Laubitya. R. D. Bannerjee tries to point out that it was impossible for any king of Malwa to go and conquer Assam. There would have been opposition to such a conqueror, according to him, from Kanauj, Magadha, and Gauda. He therefore places Mahāsena Gupta in Magadha, rather than in Malwa. Such supposition has already been disproved by other evidence. The way to Kāmarūpa was already prepared for Mahāsena Gupta. His grand-father, Kumāra Gupta, had advanced as far as Prayāga, and his father, Dāmodara Gupta, too, had pushed himself far into eastern India. Moreover it is not unlikely that Mahāsena Gupta was helped in his enterprise by Prabhākara-vardhana, as the result of the Puṣyabhūti-Gupta alliance, and probably also by Prabhākara-vardhan's allies, namely the Maukharis. The Varmans of Assam were presumably becoming very powerful and therefore causing great apprehension to other powers in Northern India. The latter obviously made common cause against the Varmans of Assam and helped Mahāsena Gupta to vanquish Susthitavarman. It was thus that Mahāsena Gupta achieved this great victory and made the songs of his glory resound in the valleys of Brahmaputrā. The Gaudas could not have arrested his advance in Eastern India, since they were already put down by the Guptas as well as by the Maukharis.

The successor of Mahāsena Gupta, according to the Apsad inscription, was Mādhava Gupta. The Harṣacarita and the Madhuban copperplate, however, mention one Deva Gupta as having come between Mahāsena Gupta and Mādhava Gupta. He is referred to, in the Madhuban inscription and the Banskhera inscription of Harṣavardhana, as the most prominent among the kings, 'who resembled wicked horses,' and who were

ultimately vanquished by Rājyavardhana. A king of Malwa was, according to the Harṣacarita, responsible for the murder of Grahavarman Maukhari, the brother-in-law of Rājyavardhana and Harṣavardhana. A daughter of Prabhākaravardhana, named Rājyasrī, was married to Grahavarman, who, though not mentioned in any Maukhari inscription, seems to have been the successor of Avantivarman. The king of Malwa, we are told in the Harṣacarita, was, however, defeated 'with ridiculous ease' by Rājyavardhana. This king of Malwa, whose name is not given in the Harṣacarita, and Deva Gupta, who was, according to Madhuban and Banskhera inscriptions, hostile to the house of Harṣavardhana, were presumably one and the same person. Who was this Deva Gupta? He cannot certainly be the son of Ādityasena Gupta, the Gupta sovereign of Magadha, who comes later than Srī Harṣa. He must have been an immediate successor of Mahāśena Gupta, who was a contemporary of Prabhākaravardhana. The Aṣṣad inscription of Ādityasena omits the name of Deva Gupta, obviously on the same grounds as in the case of Kāca Gupta and Rāma Gupta of the Imperial Gupta dynasty. Moreover, Ādityasena, whose father was a friend of Harṣavardhana, would not include in his inscriptions the name of Deva Gupta, who was an enemy of Harṣa. That name must have been purposely omitted. Further, Deva Gupta was not the direct predecessor of Ādityasena. This Deva Gupta of Malwa was perhaps the eldest son of Mahāśena Gupta, and a brother of Mādhava Gupta and Kumāra Gupta, who were sent as friends and companions to Harṣavardhana and Rājyavardhana. He revived the old feud between his family and the Maukharis. In this attempt he received help from the Gauḍas, who were constantly being harassed by their Maukhari neighbours. There

were two rival groups who participated in a great struggle for political supremacy in Northern India, at that time. The Maukharis and the Puṣyabhūtiś, who were matrimonially connected, formed one group; while Deva Gupta, the truant son of Mahāśena Gupta, and Śaśāṅka of the Gauḍas, who bore a long-standing grudge against the Maukharis, led the other political group. There was another interesting feature regarding this struggle, namely that the Maukharis and the Puṣyabhūtiś were great patrons of Buddhism, while the Guptas and the Gauḍas were staunch supporters of Brahmanic Hinduism. In order to be able to meet successfully this formidable combination of the Hindu princes of Malwa and Gauḍa, Harṣavardhana formed a military alliance with Bhāskaravarman, the son of Susthitavarman of Kāmarūpa. The king of Kāmarūpa readily joined Harṣa, since he already had a grievance against the Guptas of Malwa, one of whom, namely, Mahāśena Gupta, had defeated Susthitavarman. In the course of the conflict, Deva Gupta was killed by Rājyavardhana, and Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa, as indicated in the Nidhanapur copperplate, put down the Gauḍas. After the murder of Grahavarman Maukhari and the fall of Deva Gupta of Malwa and Śaśāṅka of Gauḍa, Harṣavardhana was the only great sovereign reigning in Northern India. The king of Kāmarūpa must have been his subordinate ally. From 606 A. D. to 646 A. D. Harṣavardhana ruled gloriously over the territory, which was formerly possessed by the Maukharis, the Guptas of Malwa and the Gauḍas. Mādhava Gupta, the younger brother of Deva Gupta, was established at Kanauj as Harṣa's subordinate ally.

The revival of the Gupta sovereignty, nay even the foundation of a new Gupta Empire *a la mode* Imperial

Guptas, were the glorious achievements of Ādityasena of the Apsad inscription. He was the son of Mādhava Gupta. There are three inscriptions referring to the times of Ādityasena. Ādityasena Gupta, who wanted to emulate the glorious career of Harṣa, and who was burning within himself to re-establish the glory of his own illustrious dynasty, took the most proper opportunity to start on a march of victory, immediately after the death of Śrī Harṣa. The recuperative capacity of the Guptas was phenomenal. The art of war and the secret of civil administration were the hereditary monopolies of the Guptas. The locality of the Apsad inscription itself indicates that the centre of Ādityasena's activities was transferred from Malwa to Magadha. Apsad is situated in Gaya district, in Bihar. The importance of the Apsad inscription, from the point of view of the history of the Later Guptas of Malwa, has already been made evident. Another inscription of Ādityasena is found on the Shahpur stone image in Bihar division of Patna district. These two inscriptions, supplemented by the Mandar hill inscription, convincingly prove Ādityasena's undisputed sovereignty in Eastern Bihar and the South. He ruled over a territory extending to the shores of the oceans, according to another inscription noticed by Fleet. He is further said to have lived to perform the Asvamedha, after having achieved imperial status. Many gold coins are discovered in different parts of Bengal, which are described as imitations of Imperial Gupta coins and which are traced back to these later Guptas of Magadha, among whom Ādityasena Gupta had been the 'first sovereign.' These coins include some showing Asvamedha and these may be reasonably ascribed to the Gupta sovereign, who performed Asvamedha, after returning from the Cola

country. According to the Deogarh inscription, Ādityasena built, after his conquest, a temple costing three lakhs of gold tankakas. The Maukhari contemporary of Ādityasena was Bhogavarman, who later became his feudatory and son-in-law. The Maukhari-Gupta struggle for political supremacy was thus ultimately decided in favour of the Guptas. The Deo Baranark inscription of his great-grandson clearly indicates Ādityasena's sovereignty in the Gomati valley in the Madhyadesa. In the Mandar hill inscription, Ādityasena is called परममहाराज महाराजाधिराज. From the Shahpur stone image inscription we know one of the dates in his regime, namely, 672-73 A. D. It is suggested that he, or his son, is the सकलेश्वरनाथ, who is said to have been defeated by the Cālukya kings, Vinayāditya (680-96 A. D.) and Vijayāditya (Bom. Gaz. Vol. I), of the Kendur plates. Ādityasena Gupta followed the example of Samudra Gupta in reaching Cola. He was the last great sovereign belonging to that glorious dynasty, whose name will be written in letters of gold, in the annals of Ancient India.

According to the Deo Baranark inscription, Deva Gupta II was the son and successor of Ādityasena. He was 'attacked on all sides' by enemies and was ultimately killed in the battle. The Cālukyas must have attacked him on one side, and Yaśovarman of Kanauj on the other side. The Deo Baranark inscription mentions Viṣṇu Gupta as the son and successor of Deva Gupta II. He is identified, by many scholars with Viṣṇu Gupta Candraditya, who is known from the Gupta coins. Certain late coins, which are obviously imitations of the Imperial Gupta coins, were discovered in Magadha and were generally ascribed to the Later Guptas, as in the case of the Aśvamedha type of coins of

Ādityasena. The last Gupta sovereign, to be mentioned in the history of Northern India, is Jivita Gupta II, the son and successor of Viṣṇu Gupta. The Deo Baranark inscription belongs to his regime. That inscription mentions four kings belonging to the last line of the Guptas, who had come over to Magadha from Malwa. They are Ādityasena, Deva Gupta, Viṣṇu Gupta and Jivita Gupta II. The name of another Gupta sovereign is also mentioned in that inscription, that of Bālāditya II, who belonged to the line of the Later Imperial Guptas. This inscription conclusively proves that the line of the Guptas of Malwa ended with Mādhava Gupta, and that a new line of 'Imperial' Guptas, was established, in Magadha, by Ādityasena, after the death of Harṣavar-dhana. The four kings mentioned in that inscription assume imperial titles. The inscription is a charter issued from Gomatikotṭaka. The name Deo Baranark seems to have been derived from Deva Varuṇārka. The records of the Western Cālukyās of Vātāpi clearly testify to the existence of a North-Indian Empire, in the last quarter of the 7th century A. D.. This empire was distinctly the one founded by Ādityasena Gupta. This last Gupta empire was presumably destroyed by three powers which came one after the other, namely, Yaśovarman of Kanauj, Lalitāditya of Kashmir, and the Gaudās. Though the political career of the Guptas ends with the fall of this last line of sovereigns, (the high and noble ideals in literature, in art, in religion, in social organisation, in political administration, in short, in the whole cultural life of the people, which had been evolved under their glorious regime, throughout nearly four centuries, left an imperishable mark on the future history and culture of India.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### A GENERAL STUDY OF THE GUPTA INSCRIPTIONS.

RELIGIOUS : LITERARY  
ADMINISTRATIVE : ECONOMIC

#### *Religious*

The Imperial Gupta period was principally a period of the revival of Hindu culture. The illustrious imperial predecessors of the Guptas, namely, the Mauryas, had been, since the days of great Asoka, staunch patrons of Buddhism. By way of a reaction, the Śuṅga dynasty, founded by Puṣyamitra, made the first successful attempt to reorganise the forces of Hinduism. The popular form of the Hindu religion and philosophy, as presented in the great epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, which are adequately called the 'Vedas of the masses;' the Hindu ideal of social and political life as taught in the Manusmṛti; the revival of ancient Vedic sacrifices, which is exemplified by the performance of the Asvamedha by Puṣyamitra; and the glorification of Sanskrit language as symbolised in the Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali—these were the main characteristics of the revival of Hinduism in the Śuṅga period. The dynasty of the Kāṇvas was itself a Brāhmaṇa royal family. This work of the revival of Hindu culture

and Hindu ideals, pioneered by the Śuṅgas, and sponsored by the Kāṇvas and the Āndhras, was enthusiastically carried on by the illustrious dynasties of the Bhārasīvas and the Vākāṭakas. The way was thus already prepared for the Guptas. The inscriptions of the Gupta period provide ample evidence to justify the assumption that the Guptas virtually founded a 'new nation,' with a 'new religious ideal' and a 'new social organisation.'

The Gupta coins and inscriptions indicate that the Gupta sovereigns were generally enthusiastic followers of the Hindu religion. The Mathura inscription of Candragupta II, and the Bihar and Bhitari inscriptions of Skandagupta represent Samudragupta to have performed the Aśvamedha in right royal epic fashion (चिरोत्सन्नाश्वमेधाहर्ता). This fact is corroborated by Samudragupta's gold coins of the Aśvamedha type. Similar coins, with the legend अश्वमेधमहेन्द्र on the reverse, have been ascribed to Kumāragupta I, who too must have performed a horse-sacrifice. The first and the second Damodarapur copperplates, of 124 G. E. and 129 G. E. respectively, are distinctly Brahmanical in nature, since they clearly refer to अग्निहोत्र and महायज्ञ. These references to several types of Vedic sacrifices, big and small, definitely go to point out how this prominent feature of the Brahmanical religion had considerably developed under the Guptas.

Candragupta II, Kumāragupta I, and Skandagupta are styled परमभागवत on their coins, which fact shows that they were devout worshippers of Bhagavān Vāsudeva. The emblems of Garuḍa and Lakṣmi, on their personal and official records, also indicate that they were ardent Vaiṣṇavas. The Meharauli iron pillar of Candragupta II is called, significantly enough, Viṣṇudhvaja. One of the Udayagiri cave inscriptions is engraved on a panel, over the figures

of Viṣṇu and Dvādaśabhujā Candī. The other Udaya-giri inscription, however, records the dedication of a cave to Sambhu. The Bilsad inscription of Kumāra Gupta I refers to the construction of a प्रतीक in the temple of Svāmī Mahāsena, thus representing another form of Hindu worship. The Bihar inscription speaks of the erection of a स्तूप, while the object of the Bhitari pillar inscription is to record the installation of the image of Śaṅgīn. The most popular sect of the Hindu religion, patronised in the Gupta period, seems to have been Vaiṣṇavism. A large number of Gupta inscriptions are distinctly representative of Vaiṣṇava tendencies. Further we hear of a temple of Cakrabhṛt, a distinct form of Viṣṇu, which is said to have been built by Cakrapālita on the embankments of the Sudarsana lake. The Indor inscription of Skanda Gupta records the donation of a gift, by one Deva Viṣṇu, for perpetually lighting a lamp, in a temple of the Sun-god. This suggests that solar worship also formed a prominent feature of the Hindu religion of that period. Another temple of the Sun was built by a guild of silk-weavers, as described in the Mandasor inscription of 437 A. D.. A part of the temple collapsed, in course of time, and was repaired, in 473 A. D., by the same guild. The erection of a चक्रस्तम्भ dedicated to God Janārdana, a form of Viṣṇu, by Mātṛviṣṇu and Dhanyaviṣṇu, is recorded in the Eran inscription of Budha Gupta. Mātṛviṣṇu, who was a feudatory of Budha Gupta, is described, in that inscription, as 'a great devotee of Bhagavān Viṣṇu.' Such inscriptions, and others of a similar nature, clearly indicate that the Hindu religion, in all its forms of worship and devotion, was adopted by Gupta sovereigns and their feudatories. The avatāras of Viṣṇu, such as the Varāha, are glorified in the right Purāṇic fashion. The

doctrine of bhakti, as means of salvation, appears to have been the generally prevalent teaching. Vedic religion, in its popular form, must have necessarily demanded, in those days, a change from mystic absolutism to popular theism.

Another significant feature of the Hindu religion is clearly brought about by a study of the Gupta inscriptions. A number of inscriptions of the Gupta sovereigns, of their feudatories, and even of private individuals, in that period, record grants of villages and land to Brāhmaṇas.<sup>1</sup> Dāna did form a special characteristic of the Brahmanical religion. It cannot be denied that state patronage was generally a privilege of the Brāhmaṇas. The five Damodarpur plates and the four Faridpur plates, for instance, refer to grants of land made either to Brāhmaṇas or to some Hindu gods. Donations are said to have been given also for the maintenance of temples and of other accessories of worship, e. g., lamps etc.. Other donations of a religious character, which clearly indicate the 'Hindu bias', of the period, are those for the performance of five great rites, for the erection of a स्तूप after the completion of the पुण्डरीक sacrifice, and for the establishment of सत्रs for Brāhmaṇas and other communities.

Ample evidence is thus available regarding a powerful religious upheaval in the Gupta period, which was characterised by the revival of sacrificial rites, big and

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1 The author of this book is working on an interesting problem of Indian Epigraphy, viz, the study of Ancient Indian inscriptions recording grants of villages etc. to Brahmanas, with a view to ascertain, if possible, the time and the manner in which various गोत्रs of Brahmanas and शाखाs of Veda spread over different parts of India.

small, of gods and goddesses belonging to the Hindu pantheon, and of other features of the Hindu religion, such as dāna to Brāhmaṇas. Curiously enough, Hindu gods and goddesses were not even referred to, except in one rare case, in the epigraphic records, discovered in the district of Mathura and its immediate neighbourhood, which extend chronologically over nearly five centuries before the rise of the Guptas. With the consolidation of power of the Imperial Guptas, in Northern India, however, the state of affairs conspicuously changed. The majority of inscriptions belonging to the Gupta period are Brahmanical in character. Besides the features of the revival of Hinduism, which are mentioned above, there is another significant thing to be noted ; and that is the universal adoption of Sanskrit language, instead of Pāli or other Prākṛtas, in the Gupta inscriptions. Brahmanic influence thus had its special stamp on all aspects of national life. In the times before the rise of the Guptas, the Prākṛta dialects had acquired such great importance, that not only were they used for inscriptions, so that those inscriptions should be understood by the general populace, who had studied little Sanskrit, but a number of literary works also, such as the *सप्तशती* of Hāla and the *बृहत्कथा* of Guṇādhyā, were written in those dialects. Sanskrit however, rose in estimation when the Guptas came to power. The very fact that all epigraphic records, which are usually intended for public information, are in literary Sanskrit language, clearly indicates that the study of Sanskrit language and literature had considerably developed, even among common people, under the Guptas. The revival of the Hindu religion gave rise to a corresponding revival of the Hindu social organisation.

In spite of all these features of Hinduism, which characterised the regime of the Guptas, one thing is absolutely certain. The Gupta sovereigns had imbibed in themselves the true spirit of Hinduism, namely, remarkable tolerance towards other religions. We have already seen how they patronised, in a variety of ways, the two other contemporary religions, Buddhism and Jainism. 'While Brahmanism', observes Sir Ramkrishna Bhandarkar, 'rose in importance and popular fervour Buddhism declined in a corresponding degree.' The Buddhist records belonging to this period, though few in number, are suggestive and significant. That Buddhism was still flourishing, at that time, is proved, beyond doubt, by the great mass of decorative sculpture and the large number of images discovered at Sarnath alone. Samudra Gupta had allowed a विहार to be built for Ceylonese pilgrims. The Sāñci pillar inscription of Candragupta II records a grant, made by a military officer, for feeding ten Buddhist mendicants and for lighting two lamps in the 'jewel-house'. The Mankuwar inscription of Kumāra Gupta I speaks of the installation of an image of Buddha, by one Bhikṣu Buddhāmītra. There is another inscription at Sāñci, dated 449 A. D., of Harisvāminī, the wife of Sanasiddha, which records the grant of twelve dīnāras, as a fixed capital, out of interest on which a mendicant belonging to अर्थसंघ was to be fed daily. There is a mention, in that inscription, also of a grant for the 'jewel house,' of three dīnāras, the interest on which was to be spent on three lamps to be lighted daily before Blessed Buddha, and of one more grant of one dīnāra, for the seats of four Buddhas, the interest to be spent on a lamp lighted daily at the seats. Further references are found, in the inscriptions of Kumāra Gupta II and Budha Gupta, to images of Buddha set up

at Saranath. More images are said to have been set up, two at Mathura, in 453 A. D. and 548 A. D., and one each at Deoriya in Allahabad district, Kasia in Gorakhpur district, Buddha Gaya and Saranath. Two things regarding the Buddhist inscriptions and images of Buddha, belonging to the Gupta period, are worth noticing. Firstly, the language even of these Buddhist records is Sanskrit, though Buddhists are known to have generally favoured Pāli; and secondly, the images of Buddha were set up and worshipped, exactly in the same manner as those of Hindu gods and goddesses. We clearly see how the Gupta revival of Hinduism had perceptibly influenced Buddhism. The principles of faith in and devotion to personal gods were incorporated in this new form of Buddhism. Use of Sanskrit language, by Buddhist teachers, considerably raised their teachings in popular estimation. Nāgārjuna developed a distinct form of Mahāyānism, modifying the original Buddhist teaching to keep pace with the revival and renovation of Brahmanism. The charm of triratna—बुद्ध, धर्म, संघ— was consequently on the wane. The earliest form of Buddhism had split up into a number of schools and had ultimately exhausted itself. We are told by Hīnen Tsang that Narasiṃha Gupta was the first Gupta sovereign to turn Buddhist. Kumāra Gupta II, Budha Gupta, and Bhānu Gupta Bālāditya II are also said to have been followers of Buddhism. The fact in these cases, however, seems to be that these sovereigns were particularly partial and sympathetic towards Buddhism. There is hardly any evidence to justify the assumption that they had actually adopted Buddhism as their religion. On the other hand the general religious tendency, even during the regime of these sovereigns, clearly appears to be Hindu. There

is no indication of any Gupta sovereign, from Candragupta II to Balāditya II, having been converted to any other faith.

A few Jaina inscriptions belonging to the Gupta period are also available. Two of them record the installation of images of Jaina Tirthaṅkaras, in 424 A.D. and 459 A.D., at Udayagiri and Kahaun respectively. An inscription of Kumāra Gupta I, dated 431 A.D., records the setting up of an image at Mathura. It seems that Jainism also had many adherents and patrons about this time. It was still lingering in Mathura, but the days of its prosperity were obviously gone. The Gupta inscriptions clearly indicate that Hinduism flourished at the cost of these rival faiths.

### *Literary*

A study of the Gupta inscriptions from the literary point of view is also interesting. Sanskrit prose and poetry are seen to have been handled with equal mastery. The evidence provided by these inscriptions definitely disproves Max Mueller's theory that Sanskrit literature had been dormant during the period of foreign invasions in India. Hariṣena, the author of the Allahabad pillar inscription, was certainly a worthy predecessor of great Kālidāsa. Another poet of considerable merit was Vāsula, the son of Kakka and the court-poet of Yaśodharman. The Meharauli iron pillar inscription is a remarkable piece of literary art. Many Gupta sovereigns themselves were great men of letters and renowned patrons of Sanskrit learning. The inscriptions leave no doubt regarding the existence of real Sanskrit Kāvya as also of a science of poetics in that period. The reference in the Junagadh rock inscription, *स्फुटमधुरचित्रकान्तशब्दसमयोदारालंकृत*, points unmistakably



to the acquaintance of the author with Sāhityasāstra, as well as to his knowledge of traditional literary alaṅkāras. The use of compounds in ornamental epithets appears to have been much in favour. A distinct departure is thus made from the epic style. The descriptions, though not of a very high order, still display considerable merit, as for instance, in the vivid picture of the devastation caused by the flooding of the dam of the Sudarsana lake. Compactness of expression is the conspicuous characteristic of the Allahabad pillar inscription. Generally the writers of the Gupta inscriptions prefer long compounds and long sentences. A variety of metres is skilfully made use of and different literary styles are adopted. What is particularly interesting from the point of view of the history of Sanskrit literature is the appearance, in these inscriptions, of the mannerisms of later Sanskrit Kāvya. Enough will have been said regarding the excellence of the literature of the Gupta period when we mention the name of Kālidāsa as being the greatest luminary in a galaxy of brilliant writers, patronised by the Gupta sovereigns and their feudatories.

#### *Administrative : Economic*

We shall now attempt a study of the Gupta inscriptions from the point of view of political administration and economic life obtaining under the Guptas. A Gupta sovereign was apparently nominated by his predecessor, as in the case of Samudra Gupta and Candragupta II. The right of primogeniture was not necessarily always enforced. Preference in succession was given to a prince, who had already proved his worth. Usually all princes were entrusted with responsible work during the regime of the sovereign. Skandagupta, for instance, was sent to fight against the Hūṇas when

he was the crown-prince. The king was the supreme head of the state and the final authority in all matters. Frequent references seem to have been made to 'divine nature' of the king, when he is called अचिन्त्यपुरुष, धनद्व-  
रुणेन्द्रान्तकसम, परमदैवत etc. The personal accomplishments of the sovereigns—literary, artistic, martial and diplomatic—which are often emphasised in the inscriptions cannot have been idle praise and may be regarded as indicating the type of education given to a prince. Bhānu Gupta is said to have personally fought the enemies. Skanda Gupta was compelled 'to sleep on bare earth,' during one of his campaigns. With regard to the domestic life of a sovereign, we merely read, in the inscriptions, the names of their queens—at least of the Paṭṭadevis. The epigraphic lists are genealogical and not dynastic; therefore several names have been omitted. Persons of royal birth were often appointed viceroys of the provinces in the empire. This practice was, however, later on, proved to be unwise, since, as we have already seen, it helped the disintegration of the empire.

The monarch was invariably assisted by a council of ministers, whose posts were often hereditary (अन्ययप्राप्त-  
साविध्य). Prthviṣeṇa, a minister of Kumāra Gupta I, for instance, was the son of Sikharasvāmin, who was a minister under Candragupta II. There does not seem to have existed a very clear-cut division between civil and military officials. The designations of ministers and other officers under the Guptas had been considerably changing. The दूत was called, according to Jayaswal (*Hindu Polity*), a सन्धिविग्रहिक. The title सन्निवन् is hardly to be met with in the Gupta inscriptions. Hariṣeṇa, the author of the Allahabad pillar inscription, was himself a कुमारामात्य, महादण्डनायक and सन्धिविग्रहिक, which fact may indicate either that a minister was

transferred from one portfolio to another or that one minister was in charge of several departments. The सन्धिविग्रहिक was expected to accompany the sovereign to the battlefield, in order to assist him in matters relating to peace and war. The कुमारामात्यs were usually governors of provinces and महादण्डनायक was a high administrative (दण्ड) officer. The defence ministers were called बलाधिकृत or महाबलाधिकृत. We have no definite evidence to say whether the Gupta sovereigns had anything like a central मन्त्रिपरिषद्. There is a reference in the Bilsad inscription to a (पा) षद, which, however, does not positively prove the existence of a central political assembly. On the other hand, the Basarh seal, discovered by Bloch, mentions the परिषद् of Udānakūpa, which fact seems to imply that local परिषद्s did exist. The reference clearly indicates that परिषद् still formed, in the Gupta period, an important element of Hindu polity. The mention, in an inscription, of the corporation of guild-presidents, traders, and chiefs of groups of artisans and of kindred bodies, श्रेष्ठिसार्थवाहकुलिकनिगम, provides interesting glimpses in the economic organisations of the Gupta period. Corporate activity seems to have been the outstanding feature of all the three aspects of national life—social, political and economic.

Various ministers and officials of different grade are referred to in the Basarh seals. The whole empire was divided, for administrative purposes, into des'as and bhuktis, the latter being subdivided into prades'as and viṣayas. Among des'as are mentioned S'ukulides'a, Madhyades'a, Surāṣṭra, Kosala, Antardedi, Dabhāla etc. The reference in the inscription of Skanda Gupta, सर्वेषु देशेषु विधाय गोपतन्, points to the fact that des'as were governed by officers, who were called goptrs. It may be recalled here that Parṇadatta was appointed by

Skanda Gupta, 'after great deliberation,' to look after the civil and military administration of Surāṣṭra. It was however found necessary to reinforce the defence of that province, and so a special military general, Senāpati Bhaṭṭārka, was deputed to assist the governor. On account of the grave political emergency which obtained in the province, at that time, the civil administration also came to be controlled later on, by the Senāpati. This is a typical case which indicates conditions demanding the proclamation of martial law in times of emergency. The list of bhuktis includes Puṇḍravardhana, Tīrabhukti, Nāgarabhukti, Śrāvastibhukti, Abhicchatrabhukti etc. The bhuktis were governed, according to the inscriptions, by Uparika Mahārājas. Many of them, such as, Rājaputradeva of Puṇḍravardhana, Govinda Gupta of Tīrabhukti, Ghaṭotkaca Gupta of Tumain, were princes belonging to the imperial family of the Guptas. Imperial officials, like Kumārāmātyas and Āyuktakas, as well as feudatory Mahārājas, were in charge of the administration of viṣayas and pradeśas, which are often referred to in the Gupta inscriptions. These include Lāṭa, Tripurī, Arikiṇa, Gayā, Koṭivarṣa etc. Some of the viṣayapatis, like Sarvanāga of Antarvedi, were directly responsible to the emperor, while others, like the viṣayapatis of Koṭivarṣa, Arikiṇa, and Tripurī, ruled under provincial governors. There existed, in those days, a regular hierarchy of officers and functionaries, to help the governors and viṣayapatis, in the administration of the political units under their charge. The inscriptions mention, in this connection, Daṇḍika, Cauroddharaṇika, Daṇḍapāsika, Nāgarasreṣṭhin, Sārthavāha, Prathamakulika, Prathamakāyastha, Pustapāla etc. The names of these officers clearly indicate the type of work

entrusted to them. It included, among other things, law and order, supervision of economic and other corporations, civic life, and clerical business. Every viṣaya consisted of a number of grāmas, which were administered by Grāmika, Mahattara, Bhojaka and other subordinate officers. The Allahabad pillar inscription indicates that, outside the limits of imperial territories, lay the vassal kingdoms and republics, whose political relation with the central imperial authority, namely, the crown, is also clearly brought out therein.

The Basarh seals provide us with ample information regarding the provincial and municipal administration as well as the economic organisation in the province of Tirabhukti. The seals mention several officials, like Uparika, Kumārāmātya, Mahāpratihāra, Mahādanda-nāyaka, Vinayasthitisthāpaka, Bhaṭṭasvapati etc. The titles of these officers clearly point to the official business entrusted to them. Further a list of government offices has been given, which is sufficient evidence to indicate the great efficiency and discipline with which civil and military administration was carried on under the Guptas. We find there : युवराजपादीयकुमारामात्याधिकरण, रणभाण्डागाराधिकरण, बलाधिकरण, दण्डपाशाधिकरण, तीरमुक्ति उपरिकाधिकरण, वैशाख्यधिष्ठिताधिकरण, विनयस्थितिस्थापकाधिकरण and श्रीपरमभट्टारकपादीयकुमारामात्याधिकरण. One of these, namely, रणभाण्डागाराधिकरण, is particularly significant. It shows that, under the Gupta regime, the department of military finance was separated from that of civil finance. This must have been certainly necessitated by the conditions prevailing under the majority of Gupta sovereigns. It had been the attempt of the Guptas, all along, not to allow their military enterprise to interfere with the civil life of the people. While fighting victorious

battles in order to satisfy their imperial ambitions, the Guptas were equally keen on raising the standard of living of their subjects.

The inscriptions of the Gupta period afford interesting glimpses in the system of revenue administration and economic life. The terms of the Gaya grant of Samudra Gupta, dated 329 A. D., which is the earliest of this kind, suggest that the village was assigned with the Uparika tax. When a village was granted to any person or community, the villagers were required not only to render general obedience to the donee but also to pay to him the usual dues from the village. These dues were of two kinds—meya, that is, contribution in kind; and hiranya, tax in cash. There was a reciprocal obligation on the part of the donee. He was not to admit in his village, after the grant was valid, the revenue-paying householders, artisans etc from other villages. This important document illustrates, according to Ghosal (*Revenue System*), the different classes of tenants inhabiting an ordinary revenue-paying village, in the early Gupta period; namely, the temporary tenants paying the Uparika tax and other tenants paying the usual contributions in cash or in kind. It further shows the strict control which the state maintained, under the Guptas, over the pious grants of land by making it an essential condition of the gift that revenue-paying tenants should not be admitted into the privileged village to the detriment of the king's revenue. Fa Hien seems to suggest, in his account, that revenue was mainly derived from the rents of the crown lands. Only those who cultivated land belonging to the sovereign had to pay, by way of tax, a portion of the gain on it. The inscriptions do not, however, provide even the slightest evidence for this supposition. The misunder-

standing is obviously caused by the fact that other sources of state-income were comparatively few and unimportant. Further there is definite evidence in the inscriptions to indicate that the state was virtual, if not legal, owner of the soil. Jayaswal, on the other hand, holds the view (*Hindu Polity*) that the Gupta title deeds inscribed on copperplates and registered at the office of the district officer, whose seals they bear, clearly prove private ownership of land. R. G. Basak also seems to support Jayaswal's opinion, but further qualifies it by stating that land belonged jointly to the state and the people, or that, in other words, it belonged to village-assemblies. He points out that the state could not alienate lands without the consent or approval of the people's representatives, the mahattara and other business-men. Moreover, according to him, only one-sixth of the sale proceeds went to the royal exchequer, five-sixths going to the funds of village-assemblies, subject to the supervision of the sovereign. It may however be urged against these views that the so-called people's representatives were but minor officials of the state. Further the word, *dharmaśāḍbhāga*, refers to the share in the spiritual merit, and not to the portion of the sale proceeds. The most convincing argument in favour of the exclusive state-ownership of the class of lands mentioned in the inscriptions is that the grant of such lands is recommended on the ground that the sovereign would thereby acquire wealth by sale proceeds, as well as spiritual merit. The elaborate official procedure comprising the three stages of formal application (*viññāpyam*, *abhyarthanam*), the verification by record-keepers, and the inspection and severance of land sold, may also seem to confirm the state ownership of such lands.

The Dhanaidaha mutilated copperplate inscription of Kumāra Gupta I, dated 432 A.D., the Damodarpur copperplates of the same Gupta sovereign, and of Budha Gupta, the Pahadpur copperplate of Budha Gupta, and Damodarpur copperplate of Bhānu Gupta provide several details regarding the nature of lands disposed of and the conditions of their tenure. There were three types of land—*samudayabāhya* or revenue-free land, *aprahata* or untilled land, and *khila kṣetra* or fallow land. These terms seem to refer to the unappropriated waste lying on the outskirts of settled villages. As Ghosal points out (*Revenue System*), the cultivable village-area was not only assessed for the usual taxes, but was also surveyed for revenue purposes, according to the prevailing standards of land-measurement. The conditions of sale, mentioned in the inscriptions, are varied. In some cases the sale adheres to the custom of non-destruction of the principal. In other cases, the sale is 'in perpetuity,' with or without the right of alienation. The Gupta inscriptions mentioned above give us further information about the authorities entrusted with the disposal of waste lands, as well as about the constitution of the office of district headquarters.

In the later imperial Gupta period, there are grants of *Parivrājaka Mahārājas* and the *Ucchakalpa Mahārājas*, which are also important from this point of view. The grants of religious nature are usually perpetual, heritable and exempt from several customary burdens of the village. Different types of taxes are mentioned, such as, *Udraṅga* or revenue received from permanent tenants, *Uparika* or revenue received from temporary tenants, and *Corakara* or police tax. The *Ucchakalpa* grants are donations to persons of various classes for the purpose of worship at and repair of temples. One note



worthy inscription of this period refers to the settlement of the boundary dispute. The two Mahārājas concerned decided on their common boundary and erected a column for that purpose, at Ambhoda. Among new items of revenue, mentioned in the inscriptions of early 7th century A. D., there is one indicated by the term, *dasāparādha*. It may refer, according to Ghosal, to the right of the donee to be exempt from the guilt accruing from the commission of some traditional offences by the villagers. Fleet, on the other hand, understands, by the term, the donee's right to the proceeds of fines inflicted for commission of ten offences by the villagers.

There is a reference, in the inscriptions of this period, to a regular administrative organisation for collection of taxes in Kathiawar and North Gujerat. As has been pointed out elsewhere, land-grants were sanctioned even by feudatories of sovereigns, under the regime of the last Gupta line of Magadha. There is clear evidence to show that waste-lands were then exclusively owned by the state. The system of measuring land according to fixed standard appears to have been given up. The Deo Baranark inscription of Jivita Gupta II mentions *Udraṅga*, *Uparika*, *Dasāparādha* and *Pañca*, as sources of revenue. The burden of forced service, though in existence, was very mild. Royal land was divided, according to Hiuen Tsang, into four classes:—

(1) Lands for the provision of the expenses of religious activities of the sovereign himself ;

(2) lands to be endowed to great public servants, by way of remuneration ;

(3) lands given away as reward for high intellectual eminence ; and

(4) lands given as gifts to various sects and communities.

With reference to the minting of coins, Vincent Smith mentions a specific financial expedient illustrating the fixed policy of the Guptas, in times of extraordinary crisis. The weight of coins remained unchanged even during emergency, but there was definite decline effected in the amount of pure gold.

This general study of the Gupta inscriptions from the religious, literary, administrative and economic points of view bears ample testimony to the high standard of perfection in several aspects of national life attained under the regime of the Guptas, whose sole ideal was the propagation of peace, prosperity and happiness among the people.

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## The Imperial Guptas (Early and Later)

Śrī Gupta ( circa 170 A. D. to 200 A. D. )

⋮  
Gupta

|  
Ghaṭotkaca

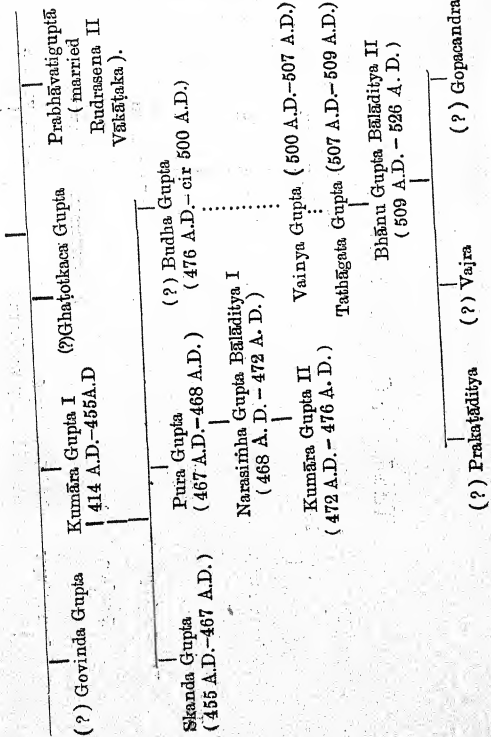
|  
Candra Gupta I = Kumāradevī  
( 315 A. D. - 328 A. D. )

|  
Kāca ( 328 A. D. )      |  
Samudra Gupta = Dattadevī  
( 328 A. D. - 376 A. D. )

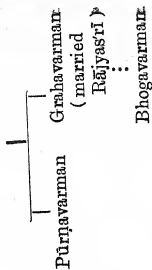
|  
Rāma Gupta

|  
Candra Gupta II = Dhruvadevī  
( and Kuberanāgā )  
( 378 A. D. - 414 A. D. )

|  
( 376 A. D. - 377 A. D. )







Deva Gupta I = Śrīmatīdevī Kumāra Gupta (II)

### Last Imperial Guptas of Magadha

Ādityasena = Kṣṇadevī

Deva Gupta II = Kamalādevī

Viṣṇu Gupta = Iṣṭadevī

Jīvitā Gupta II

### The Vakāṭakas

Vindhyaśakti

Pravarasena I

Gautamīputra (did not  
rule)

Rudrasena I

Prthviśeṇa I

Rudrasena II ( married

| Prabhāvatiguptā )

Divākaraśeṇa (?)

Pravarasena II

Narendrasena

Prthviśeṇa II

Devasena

Harīśeṇa

### The Puṣyabhūtiś

Rājyavardhana I

Ādityavardhana = Mahāśeṇa-

guptā

Prabhākaraśavardhana

Rājyavardhana

Harṣavardhana

Rājyaśrī

( married

Grahavarman

Maukhari )-



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